THE SICKNESS UNTO DEATH

THE SICKNESS UNTO DEATH

BY S. KIERKEGAARD

TRANSLATED

WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY

WALTER LOWRIE

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PREFACE BY THE TRANSLATOR

AS the translation of Kierkegaard's works into English manifestly required the labor of many, I chose in the division of labor to assume responsibility for the religious works which were begun or completed in the year 1848 and were published for the most part in the following year. In fact I have done more than that, for I have translated the *Stages on Life's Way*, *Repetition*, *and Fear and Trembling*, beside completing Professor Swenson's translation of the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Nevertheless I have in one respect done less than I proposed, for I did not venture till now to lay hands upon *The Sickness unto Death*, which not only belongs to the period I had chosen but is one of the most important productions of that most productive period of S.K.'s life. For the Oxford University Press had another translator in mind for this difficult task, and only when the war had put an end to this plan, and when Mrs. Swenson generously put in my hands her husband's translation of about a quarter of this work, was I encouraged to undertake it. To David F. Swenson, who had been my chief stay in this whole enterprise, I owe also this posthumous encouragement, which I am glad

to acknowledge here. I wish that I could put his name as translator upon the title page of this book, as I at first proposed to do; but, though his work was a necessary encouragement, the translation which he left among his papers was merely a first draft, which surely with his scrupulous self-criticism he would have revised very radically had he lived, and I cannot venture to ascribe to him the translation I have made.

The Sickness unto Death is a "repetition" in maturer years of *Fear and Trembling*, one of S.K.'s earliest works (1843), in which the completely non-religious pseudonym Johannes de silentio investigated the problems of repentance and faith. It is still more closely related to *The Concept of Dread* by Vigilius Haufniensis (1844), which is the only other book which the author himself describes as "psychological." Mr. Dru, who has undertaken to translate this work, is in spite of the war free to carry it out, because a serious wound has for the present incapacitated him for active service, and therefore this work will be available for comparison.

With this publication the religious works of S.K.'s most mature period are complete in an English translation. They are so closely related that they ought to be translated by one author, even if his translation is not the best attainable. Besides this one volume issued by the Princeton

University Press, there have been published in five volumes by the Oxford University Press: *Christian Discourses*, *The Point of View*, *The Present Age*, *Training in Christianity*, and *For Self-Examination*. But these six volumes contain thirteen separate works, which I enumerate here in the order in which they were produced: *Christian Discourses*, *The Lilies of the Field and the Birds of the Air*, the *Three Discourses* of 1848, *The Point of View for My Work as an Author*, *About My Work as an Author*, *Two Notes about the Individual*, *Two Treatises* (one translated by Mr. Dru), *Training in Christianity*, *An Edifying Discourse* of 1851, *For Self-Examination*, and *Judge for Yourselves*.

A point has now been reached in the publication of S.K.'s works in English when it can be affirmed that all the works properly included in what S.K. called his "Literature" have been, or are about to be, in the space of barely six years, rendered available to English readers. Besides this we have Mr. Dru's *Selections from the Journal*, which are far more ample than even Germany can boast of; and we have, beside my biography entitled *Kierkegaard*, eight works about the man and his doctrine. Three of the works have appeared in translations by different authors—which shows, as Professor Steere aptly said to me, "how many hens are setting on these eggs." There have been in fact

during this brief period fifteen authors at work on S.K., ten of them as translators; and eight publishers have been involved, among whom the Oxford University Press easily leads with nine volumes, Princeton University Press comes next with six, and then the Augsburg Publishing House with six smaller volumes.

Princeton, New Jersey WALTER LOWRIE
May 5, 1941

INTRODUCTION BY THE TRANSLATOR

MY book on *Kierkegaard* (pp. 408-449) furnishes a more ample introduction to the works of this period of S.K.'s life, and to this work in particular, than can be given here, and the following chapter (pp. 450-483) gives an account of the difficulty he encountered in deciding to publish them. A more searching analysis of the whole situation may be found in the *Kierkegaard-Studien* of Professor Emanuel Hirsch, pp. 357-389.

This is not said as a way of evading the task of writing an introduction to this book, but as a justification for restricting the scope of it to essential points which are illuminated by the *Journal*.

A part of this work, as S.K. says, "was written before the catastrophe" (i.e. the war with Germany and the Danish constitutional revolution, both of which were compressed within a period of a month in the spring of 1848), and hence before his Easter experience which altered radically the character of his writing. The polemical tone of the later chapters attests the effect of it.

Hirsch speaks of this work and the *Training in Christianity* as "the two masterpieces of Kier-

kegaard as a Christian writer," and he affirms that along with *The Point of View* "no other Christian-religious or Christian-theological works of the nineteenth century stand so good a chance of being introduced into the rank of the imperishable works of the Christian Church."

S.K.'s purpose in this work was essentially religious. He proposed to preface the book with a prayer, as he did all of his Edifying Discourses; but he discarded this thought when he reflected that "a prayer would give the book almost too much the semblance of the edifying" (VII B 143). Yet the prayer may well be cited here:

"Father in heaven, to Thee the congregation often makes its petition for all who are sick and sorrowful, and when someone amongst us lies ill, alas, of mortal sickness the congregation sometimes desires a special petition; Grant that we may each one of us become in good time aware what sickness it is which is the sickness unto death, and aware that we are all of us suffering from this sickness. O Lord Jesus Christ, who didst come to earth to heal them that suffer from this sickness, from which, alas, we all suffer, but from which Thou art able to heal only those who are conscious that they are sick in this way; help Thou us in this sickness to hold fast to Thee, to the end that we may be

healed of it. O God the Holy Ghost, who comest to help us in this sickness if we honestly desire to be healed; remain with us so that for no single instant we may to our own destruction shun the Physician, but may remain with Him—delivered from sickness. For to be with Him is to be delivered from our sickness, and when we are with Him we are saved from all sickness."

The word "psychological" was substituted in the title of this book for "edifying." Making a subtle distinction, S.K. declared, "*for* edification is not my category." He meant, I suppose, that this expression implied authority, whereas when he called his Discourses "edifying" he was asserting merely that they were of a sort that might have this effect. It is significant therefore that this word ultimately found its way back into the title in the form which hitherto he had not ventured to use—except in the last section of the *Christian Discourses*, "Thoughts which Wound from Behind—for edification."

In all his works S.K. gives evidence of a profound knowledge of human psychology, but only this work and *The Concept of Dread* are described in the title as "psychological." No one can deny the appropriateness of this characterization—but how different all this is from what today passes for psychology!

In the preliminary notes for this book S.K. remarks (VIII B 151), "in Section III of Part First I will now describe psychologically the forms of despair as they display themselves in reality, in actual men, whereas in Section I despair was treated as abstractly as possible, and in Section II it was shown that consciousness is the decisive characteristic of despair."

On the date of May 13, 1848, when the book was finished, S.K. made an entry in his *Journal* (VIII A 651*ff.*) which he entitled "A Report about *The Sickness unto Death.*" He says, "There is one difficulty about this book: it is too dialectical and strict to permit of the employment of rhetoric, of revival, of moving effect. The title itself seems to indicate discourses, the title is lyrical. Perhaps the title cannot be used; but at any rate the book has enriched me with a capital *schema* which can always be used in discourses, but without being apparent. The fact is that before I can begin to employ the rhetorical I always must have the dialectical at my finger tips, must go through it many times. This was not the case with this subject." He proceeds to suggest eight themes for discourses.

Before this work had assumed a definite form S.K. proposed (VIII A 558, February 1848) to publish it along with others he then had in hand under the common title:

THOUGHTS WHICH HEAL FUNDAMENTALLY,
CHRISTIAN THERAPEUTIC

"Here the doctrine of the atonement shall be treated. First it is to be shown where the sickness is: sin. So it will be in two parts—or better in three.

(1). THOUGHTS WHICH WOUND FROM BEHIND —FOR EDIFICATION.

(2). ABOUT THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF SIN.
THE SICKNESS UNTO DEATH
Christian Discourses.

(3). FUNDAMENTAL HEALING
The Christian Therapeutic.
The Atonement."

In November of 1848 he proposed to include all the works produced in that year, except *The Point of View*, under a single title: "The Collected Works of Completion."

About the beginning of 1850, looking back upon the year 1848, S.K. said of it in his *Journal* (X^6 A 249), "for me it was incomparably the richest and most fruitful year I have experienced as an author. The productions of the year 1848 I have not yet published, with exception of the little work by the new pseudonym Anti-Climacus, *The Sickness unto Death*, a part of which antedates the catastrophe of '48. The remaining productions are lying completely

finished and ready for publication so soon as I understand that the moment has come." In another place (X^4 A 560, June 19, 1852) he says, "Then came '48. I was raised to such a height as I never had known, and I understood myself completely in what was past and already accomplished." This was in fact the zenith of his productivity as an author. He pursued with singleness of aim "the task of making clear what Christianity is," and he performed it with a degree of success which could be attained only by the rare combination of dialectical acumen and poetical genius which he possessed. But naturally this prodigious labor, carried on throughout a year which for him was marked by more emotional experiences than any other, almost exhausted the strength of this frail man, or, as he said (X^2 A 66), "to put it in my language, God has run me to a standstill."

And not for physical weariness only was S.K. at a standstill in 1849. Having produced this great literature, he did not know what to do with it. From the thought of publishing such trenchant works he recoiled in dismay. Difficulty after difficulty presented itself to his mind. These were of many sorts. The difficulty about publishing *The Point of View* was simple but very singular: it was the doubt "whether a man has a right to let people know how good he is." That proved an insurmountable obstacle.

Hence he resolved to leave this work to be published after his death, "as a report to history," and even the "abbreviation" which he wrote in place of it he could not bring himself to publish until August 1851. There were more practical obstacles in the way of publishing the other works, which might well be regarded, even if they had not been so described, as "a condemnation of Christendom," as "an attempt to introduce Christianity into Christendom"; and as such they were sure to be resented, even though they were introduced by the statement that they were written "poetically, without authority," and merely "to call attention." If he were to publish these books, or, as he put it, "to step forth in character," he expected to encounter the most serious sort of persecution, at least that he would find it impossible to obtain a post in the Established Church, either as a country parson (as he had thought at an earlier time), or in a seminary (which now seemed to him more appropriate). At that moment such a post seemed essential to his physical welfare, for he was then faced by the gravest economic difficulties. But he also entertained the hope that after suffering so much by reason of his "heterogeneity" he might find happiness in working like normal men, working "more extensively," as he put it, instead of "intensively" as hitherto he had

worked. And we find to our surprise that there was another reason, the hope that if he became "homogeneous" he might look for a *rapprochement* with Regina, who was now Madame Schlegel. For all of these reasons combined the publication of such works seemed to him a very bold "venture," which would deprive him of all the conditions which had made his life tolerable, or indeed which made it possible.

His debate with himself was excruciating and long drawn out. It was not until the middle of the year 1849 that, by a combination of circumstances, his resolution was formed to publish at least *The Sickness unto Death*, that being the work which seemed likely to give the least offense. When the book was published he was agreeably surprised that Bishop Mynster made no great fuss about it. For this he was so grateful that he proposed to dedicate to the old Bishop one of the smaller and least offensive of the works he had ready—perhaps it was the *Cyclus of Ethico-Religious Treatises*. Among his published papers there are six pages (X^6 B 162-170) devoted to various drafts of an elaborate dedication to the Bishop, which were never used because in the meanwhile the breach between the two men became wider.

But it would be unjust to S.K. were we to stop here, without seeking a nobler and more generous reason for his desperate solicitude. In

fact the principal obstacle which he discovered was not unlike that which prevented him from publishing *The Point of View*, for it seemed to him inhuman, even "demoniacal," to confront Christendom with such an "assault of thoughts," unless one had the authority of an Apostle or the attestation which only martyrdom could give to a "witness for the truth." He felt that while he was a very imperfect Christian he might seem to be exacting perfection of others, whereas in fact he regarded these works as his own education in Christianity (cf. especially X^4 A 560, 666).

That this was the principal obstacle is shown by his almost childish delight in the discovery of the new pseudonym Anti-Climacus (X^2 A 147, 177; cf. my *Kierkegaard*, pp. 456*f.*), who figured first as the author of *The Sickness unto Death*, and again as the author of *Training in Christianity*. It must be understood that this manifest fiction could not in the least degree protect S.K. from the external dangers he apprehended, for no one could be in doubt who was the author, even if S.K.'s name had not appeared on the title page as editor. This pseudonym was adopted merely to relieve his own fine feeling of propriety. It must be understood also that this form of pseudonymity was totally different from that which hitherto he had used. In the case of the other pseudony-

mous works S.K. was scrupulous to make the text agree with the character he ascribed to the pseudonym. Hence he was justified in affirming that not a word uttered by his pseudonyms could properly be referred to him as an expression of his personal view. There is nothing of the sort here, for these later works were the sincerest expression of his own belief, and he had expected to publish them under his own name. The pseudonym was an afterthought. Here therefore every word can be regarded as his own, when now for the first time, with complete frank-heartedness, without resort to the device of "indirect communication," as in the earlier pseudonymous works, and without the "economy" (to use a word which is not his) he employed in the Edifying Discourses, he essays to tell directly and as plainly as possible what Christianity is and all that it is, even if no man can live up to the obligations which it imposes.

The Sickness unto Death is (to recall the title of Robert Burton's famous book) an "Anatomy of Melancholy." But so also was *The Concept of Dread*, and some of the other pseudonymous works are hardly less deserving of this title—*Either/Or* most of all, and in some measure *Repetition*, *Fear and Trembling*, and the *Stages*. But S.K. was not content with a diagnosis, he also prescribed the remedy. In his earlier works (inasmuch as he himself had not yet been

healed) he could only indicate in a general way that the remedy was to be sought in religion. Here (in the last word of the book, which repeats one of the first words) he gives, if not the prescription for medication of this sickness in the self, at least the precise formula for health, that is, for the condition of the self when this sickness is completely eradicated: that the self "by relating itself to its own self and by willing to be itself is grounded transparently in the Power which constituted it." And "this," he says emphatically, "is the definition of faith."

W. L.

THE SICKNESS UNTO DEATH

A Christian Psychological Exposition
for Edification and Awakening

By

ANTI-CLIMACUS

Edited by

S. KIERKEGAARD

Copenhagen 1849
[July 30]

Herr! gieb uns blode Augen
fur Dinge, die nichts taugen,
und Augen voller Klarheit
in alle deine Wahrheit.

In the manuscript S.K. indicated the source of this motto as follows· A sermon by Bishop Albertini, cf *Handbuch deutcher Beredsamkeit* v. Dr D. L. B Wolff, Leipzig, 1845, 1ste D. p. 293

PREFACE

TO many the form of this "exposition" will perhaps seem strange; it will seem to them too strict to be edifying, and too edifying to be strictly scientific. As to this latter point I have no opinion. As to the first, however, this does not express my opinion of the matter; and if it were true that the form is too strict to be edifying, that, according to my conception, would be a fault. It is one question whether it cannot be edifying to everyone, seeing that not everyone possesses the capacity for following it; it is another question whether it possesses the specific character of the edifying. From the Christian point of view everything, absolutely everything should serve for edification. The sort of learning which is not in the last resort edifying is precisely for that reason unchristian. Everything that is Christian must bear some resemblance to the address which a physician makes beside the sick-bed: although it can be fully understood only by one who is versed in medicine, yet it must never be forgotten that it is pronounced beside the sick-bed. This relation of the Christian teaching to life (in contrast with a scientific aloofness from life), or this ethical side of Christianity, is es-

sentially the edifying, and the form in which it is presented, however strict it may be, is altogether different, qualitatively different, from that sort of learning which is "indifferent," the lofty heroism of which is from a Christian point of view so far from being heroism that from a Christian point of view it is an inhuman sort of curiosity. The Christian heroism (and perhaps it is rarely to be seen) is to venture wholly to be oneself, as an individual man, this definite individual man, alone before the face of God, alone in this tremendous exertion and this tremendous responsibility; but it is not Christian heroism to be humbugged by the pure idea of humanity or to play the game of marvelling at world-history. All Christian knowledge, however strict its form, ought to be anxiously concerned; but this concern is precisely the note of the edifying. Concern implies relationship to life, to the reality of personal existence, and thus in a Christian sense it is seriousness; the high aloofness of indifferent learning, is, from the Christian point of view, far from being seriousness, it is, from the Christian point of view, jest and vanity. But seriousness again is the edifying.

This little book therefore is in one sense composed in a way that a seminary student could write it; in another sense, however, in a way that perhaps not every professor could write it.

But the fact that the form in which this treatise is clothed is what it is, is at least the result of due reflection, and at all events it is certainly correct from a psychological point of view. There is a more solemn style which is so solemn that it does not signify much, and since one is too well accustomed to it, it easily becomes entirely meaningless.

Only one remark more, doubtless a superfluity, but for that I am willing to assume the blame: I would call attention once for all to the fact that in this whole book, as the title indeed says, despair is conceived as the sickness, not as the cure. So dialectical is despair. So also in the Christian terminology death is the expression for the greatest spiritual wretchedness, and yet the cure is simply to die, to "die from."

1848.

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"THIS sickness is not unto death" (John 11:4), and yet Lazarus died; for when the disciples misunderstood the words which Christ adjoined later, "Lazarus our friend is asleep, but I go to wake him out of his sleep" (11:11), He said plainly, "Lazarus is dead" (11:14). So then Lazarus is dead, and yet this sickness was not unto death; he was dead, and yet this sickness is not unto death. Now we know that Christ was thinking of the miracle which would permit the bystanders, "if they believed, to see the glory of God" (11:40), the miracle by which He awoke Lazarus from the dead, so that this sickness was not only not unto death, but, as Christ had foretold, "for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (11:4). Oh, but even if Christ had not awakened Lazarus from the dead, is it not true that this sickness, that death itself, was not a sickness unto death? When Christ comes to the grave and cries with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth" (11:43), it is evident enough that "this" sickness is not unto death. But even if Christ had not said these words—merely the fact that He, who is "the resurrection and the life" (11:25), comes to the grave, is not this a suffi-

cient sign that *this* sickness is not unto death, does not the fact that Christ exists mean that *this* sickness is not unto death? And what help would it have been to Lazarus to be awakened from the dead, if the thing must end after all with his dying—how would that have helped Lazarus, if He did not live who is the resurrection and the life for everyone who believes in Him? No, it is not because Lazarus was awakened from the dead, not for this can one say that *this* sickness is not unto death; but because He lives, therefore this sickness is not unto death. For, humanly speaking, death is the last thing of all; and, humanly speaking, there is hope only so long as there is life. But Christianly understood death is by no means the last thing of all, hence it is only a little event within that which is all, an eternal life; and Christianly understood there is in death infinitely much more hope than merely humanly speaking there is when there not only is life but this life exhibits the fullest health and vigor.

So then in the Christian understanding of it not even death is the sickness unto death, still less everything which is called earthly and temporal suffering: want, sickness, wretchedness, affliction, adversities, torments, mental sufferings, sorrow, grief. And even if such things are so painful and hard to bear that we men say, or at all events the sufferer says, "This is

worse than death"—everything of the sort, which, if it is not a sickness, is comparable to a sickness, is nevertheless, in the Christian understanding of it, not the sickness unto death.

So it is that Christianity has taught the Christian to think dauntlessly of everything earthly and worldly, including death. It is almost as though the Christian must be puffed up because of this proud elevation above everything men commonly call misfortune, above that which men commonly call the greatest evil. But then in turn Christianity has discovered an evil which man as such does not know of; this misery is the sickness unto death. What the natural man considers horrible—when he has in this wise enumerated everything and knows nothing more he can mention, this for the Christian is like a jest. Such is the relation between the natural man and the Christian; it is like the relation between a child and a man: what the child shudders at, the man regards as nothing. The child does not know what the dreadful is; this the man knows, and he shudders at it. The child's imperfection consists, first of all, in not knowing what the dreadful is; and then again, as an implication of this, in shuddering at that which is not dreadful. And so it is also with the natural man, he is ignorant of what the dreadful truly is, yet he is not thereby exempted from shuddering; no, he shudders

at that which is not the dreadful: he does not know the true God, but this is not the whole of it, he worships an idol as God.

Only the Christian knows what is meant by the sickness unto death. He acquires as a Christian a courage which the natural man does not know—this courage he acquires by learning fear for the still more dreadful. Such is the way a man always acquires courage; when one fears a greater danger, it is as though the other did not exist. But the dreadful thing the Christian learned to know is "the sickness unto death."

PART FIRST

THE SICKNESS UNTO DEATH IS DESPAIR

I. THAT DESPAIR IS THE SICKNESS UNTO DEATH

A. DESPAIR IS A SICKNESS IN THE SPIRIT, IN THE SELF, AND SO IT MAY ASSUME A TRIPLE FORM: IN DESPAIR AT NOT BEING CONSCIOUS OF HAVING A SELF (DESPAIR IMPROPERLY SO CALLED); IN DESPAIR AT NOT WILLING TO BE ONESELF; IN DESPAIR AT WILLING TO BE ONESELF.[1]

MAN is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is the self? The self is a relation which relates itself to its own self, or it is that in the relation [which accounts for it] that the relation relates itself to its own self; the self is not the relation but [consists in the fact] that the relation relates itself to its own self. Man is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity, in short it is a synthesis. A synthesis is a relation between two factors. So regarded, man is not yet a self.

In the relation between two, the relation is the third term as a negative unity, and the two relate themselves to the relation, and in the relation to the relation; such a relation is that between soul and body, when man is regarded as soul. If on the contrary the relation relates it-

self to its own self, the relation is then the positive third term, and this is the self.

Such a relation which relates itself to its own self (that is to say, a self) must either have constituted itself or have been constituted by another.

If this relation which relates itself to its own self is constituted by another, the relation doubtless is the third term, but this relation (the third term) is in turn a relation relating itself to that which constituted the whole relation.

Such a derived, constituted, relation is the human self, a relation which relates itself to its own self, and in relating itself to its own self relates itself to another. Hence it is that there can be two forms of despair properly so called. If the human self had constituted itself, there could be a question only of one form, that of not willing to be one's own self, of willing to get rid of oneself. This formula [i.e. that the self is constituted by another] is the expression for the total dependence of the relation (the self namely), the expression for the fact that the self cannot of itself attain and remain in equilibrium and rest by itself, but only by relating itself to that Power which constituted the whole relation. Indeed, so far is it from being true that this second form of despair (despair at not willing to be one's own self) denotes only a particular kind of despair, that on the

contrary all despair can in the last analysis be reduced to this. If a man in despair is as he thinks conscious of his despair, does not talk about it meaninglessly as of something which befell him (pretty much as when a man who suffers from vertigo talks with nervous self-deception about a weight upon his head or about its being like something falling upon him, etc., this weight and this pressure being in fact not something external but an inverse reflection from an inward experience), and if by himself and by himself only he would abolish the despair, then by all the labor he expends he is only laboring himself deeper into a deeper despair. The disrelationship of despair is not a simple disrelationship but a disrelationship in a relation which relates itself to its own self and is constituted by another, so that the disrelationship in that self-relation reflects itself infinitely in the relation to the Power which constituted it.

This then is the formula which describes the condition of the self when despair is completely eradicated: by relating itself to its own self and by willing to be itself the self is grounded transparently in the Power which posited it.

B. POSSIBILITY AND ACTUALITY OF DESPAIR

Is despair an advantage or a drawback? Regarded in a purely dialectical way it is both. If

one were to stick to the abstract notion of despair, without thinking of any concrete despairer, one might say that it is an immense advantage. The possibility of this sickness is man's advantage over the beast, and this advantage distinguishes him far more essentially that the erect posture, for it implies the infinite erectness or loftiness of being spirit. The possibility of this sickness is man's advantage over the beast; to be sharply observant of this sickness constitutes the Christian's advantage over the natural man; to be healed of this sickness is the Christian's bliss.

So then it is an infinite advantage to be able to despair; and yet it is not only the greatest misfortune and misery to be in despair; no, it is perdition. Ordinarily there is no such relation between possibility and actuality; if it is an advantage to be able to be this or that, it is a still greater advantage to be such a thing. That is to say, being is related to the ability to be as an ascent. In the case of despair, on the contrary, being is related to the ability to be as a fall. Infinite as is the advantage of the possibility, just so great is the measure of the fall. So in the case of despair the ascent consists in not being in despair. Yet this statement is open to misunderstanding. The thing of not being in despair is not like not being lame, blind, etc. In case the not being in despair means neither more

nor less than not being this, then it is precisely to be it. The thing of not being in despair must mean the annihilation of the possibility of being this; if it is to be true that a man is not in despair, one must annihilate the possibility every instant. Such is not ordinarily the relation between possibility and actuality. Although thinkers say[2] that actuality is the annihilated possibility, yet this is not entirely true; it is the fulfilled, the effective possibility. Here, on the contrary, the actuality (not being in despair), which in its very form is a negation, is the impotent, annihilated possibility; ordinarily, actuality in comparison with possibility is a confirmation, here it is a negation.

Despair is the disrelationship in a relation which relates itself to itself. But the synthesis is not the disrelationship, it is merely the possibility, or, in the synthesis is latent the possibility of the disrelationship. If the synthesis were the disrelationship, there would be no such thing as despair, for despair would then be something inherent in human nature as such, that is, it would not be despair, it would be something that befell a man, something he suffered passively, like an illness into which a man falls, or like death which is the lot of all. No, this thing of despairing is inherent in man himself; but if he were not a synthesis, he could not despair, nor, if the synthesis were not from

God's hand, constituted in the right relationship, could man despair.

Whence then comes despair? From the relation wherein the synthesis relates itself to itself, in that God who made man a relationship lets this go as it were out of His hand, that is, in the fact that the relation relates itself to itself. And herein, in the fact that the relation is spirit, is the self, consists the responsibility under which all despair lies, and so lies every instant it exists, however much and however ingeniously the despairer, deceiving himself and others, may talk of his despair as a misfortune which has befallen him, with a confusion of things different, as in the case of vertigo aforementioned, with which, though it is qualitatively different, despair has much in common, since vertigo is under the rubric soul what despair is under the rubric spirit, and is pregnant with analogies to despair.

So when the disrelationship—that is, despair—has set in, does it follow as a matter of course that it continues? No, it does not follow as a matter of course; if the disrelationship continues, it does not follow as a consequence of the disrelation but as a consequence of the relation which relates itself to itself. That is to say, every time the disrelation expresses itself, and every instant it exists, it is to the relation one must revert. Observe that we speak

of a man contracting a disease, maybe through carelessness. Then the illness sets in, and from that instant it affirms itself and is now an *actuality*, the origin of which recedes more and more into the *past*. It would be cruel and inhuman if one were to continue to say incessantly, "This instant thou, the sick man, art contracting this disease"; that is, if every instant one were to resolve the actuality of the disease into its possibility. It is true that he did contract the disease, but this he did only once; the continuance of the disease is a simple consequence of the fact that he once contracted it, its progress is not to be referred every instant to him as the cause; he contracted it, but one cannot say that he *is contracting* it. Not so with despair: every actual instant of despair is to be referred back to possibility, every instant the man in despair is *contracting* it, it is constantly in the present tense, nothing comes to pass here as a consequence of a bygone actuality superseded; at every actual instant of despair the despairer bears as his responsibility all the foregoing experience in possibility as a present. This comes from the fact that despair is a qualification of spirit, that it is related to the eternal in man. But the eternal he cannot get rid of, no, not to all eternity; he cannot cast it from him once for all, nothing is more impossible; every instant he does not possess it he must

have cast it or be casting it from him—but it comes back, every instant he is in despair he contracts despair. For despair is not a result of the disrelationship but of the relation which relates itself to itself. And the relation to himself a man cannot get rid of, any more than he can get rid of himself, which moreover is one and the same thing, since the self is the relationship to oneself.

C. DESPAIR IS "THE SICKNESS UNTO DEATH"

The concept of the sickness unto death must be understood, however, in a peculiar sense. Literally it means a sickness the end and outcome of which is death. Thus one speaks of a mortal sickness as synonymous with a sickness unto death. In this sense despair cannot be called the sickness unto death. But in the Christian understanding of it death itself is a transition unto life. In view of this, there is from the Christian standpoint no earthly, bodily sickness unto death. For death is doubtless the last phase of the sickness, but death is not the last thing. If in the strictest sense we are to speak of a sickness unto death, it must be one in which the last thing is death, and death the last thing. And this precisely is despair.

Yet in another and still more definite sense despair is the sickness unto death. It is indeed very far from being true that, literally under-

stood, one dies of this sickness, or that this sickness ends with bodily death. On the contrary, the torment of despair is precisely this, not to be able to die. So it has much in common with the situation of the moribund when he lies and struggles with death, and cannot die. So to be sick *unto* death is, not to be able to die—yet not as though there were hope of life; no, the hopelessness in this case is that even the last hope, death, is not available. When death is the greatest danger, one hopes for life; but when one becomes acquainted with an even more dreadful danger, one hopes for death. So when the danger is so great that death has become one's hope, despair is the disconsolateness of not being able to die.

It is in this last sense that despair is the sickness unto death, this agonizing contradiction, this sickness in the self, everlastingly to die, to die and yet not to die, to die the death. For dying means that it is all over, but dying the death means to live to experience death; and if for a single instant this experience is possible, it is tantamount to experiencing it forever. If one might die of despair as one dies of a sickness, then the eternal in him, the self, must be capable of dying in the same sense that the body dies of sickness. But this is an impossibility; the dying of despair transforms itself constantly into a living. The despairing man can-

not die; no more than "the dagger can slay thoughts" can despair consume the eternal thing, the self, which is the ground of despair, whose worm dieth not, and whose fire is not quenched. Yet despair is precisely *self*-consuming, but it is an impotent self-consumption which is not able to do what it wills; and this impotence is a new form of self-consumption, in which again, however, the despairer is not able to do what he wills, namely, to consume himself. This is despair raised to a higher potency, or it is the law for the potentiation. This is the hot incitement, or the cold fire in despair, the gnawing canker whose movement is constantly inward, deeper and deeper, in impotent self-consumption. The fact that despair does not consume him is so far from being any comfort to the despairing man that it is precisely the opposite, this comfort is precisely the torment, it is precisely this that keeps the gnawing pain alive and keeps life in the pain. This precisely is the reason why he despairs—not to say despaired—because he cannot consume himself, cannot get rid of himself, cannot become nothing. This is the potentiated formula for despair, the rising of the fever in the sickness of the self.

A despairing man is in despair over *something*. So it seems for an instant, but only for an instant; that same instant the true despair man-

ifests itself, or despair manifests itself in its true character. For in the fact that he despaired of *something*, he really despaired of himself, and now would be rid of himself. Thus when the ambitious man whose watchword was "Either Caesar or nothing"[3] does not become Caesar, he is in despair thereat. But this signifies something else, namely, that precisely because he did not become Caesar he now cannot endure to be himself. So properly he is not in despair over the fact that he did not become Caesar, but he is in despair over himself for the fact that he did not become Caesar. This self which, had he become Caesar, would have been to him a sheer delight (though in another sense equally in despair), this self is now absolutely intolerable to him. In a profounder sense it is not the fact that he did not become Caesar which is intolerable to him, but the self which did not become Caesar is the thing that is intolerable; or, more correctly, what is intolerable to him is that he cannot get rid of himself. If he had become Caesar he would have been rid of himself in desperation, but now that he did not become Caesar he cannot in desperation get rid of himself. Essentially he is equally in despair in either case, for he does not possess himself, he is not himself. By becoming Caesar he would not after all have become himself but have got rid of himself, and by not becoming

Caesar he falls into despair over the fact that he cannot get rid of himself. Hence it is a superficial view (which presumably has never seen a person in despair, not even one's own self) when it is said of a man in despair, "He is consuming himself." For precisely this it is he despairs of, and to his torment it is precisely this he cannot do, since by despair fire has entered into something that cannot burn, or cannot burn up, that is, into the self.

So to despair over something is not yet properly despair. It is the beginning, or it is as when the physician says of a sickness that it has not yet declared itself. The next step is the declared despair, despair over oneself. A young girl is in despair over love, and so she despairs over her lover, because he died, or because he was unfaithful to her. This is not a declared despair; no, she is in despair over herself. This self of hers, which, if it had become "his" beloved, she would have been rid of in the most blissful way, or would have lost, this self is now a torment to her when it has to be a self without "him"; this self which would have been to her her riches (though in another sense equally in despair) has now become to her a loathsome void, since "he" is dead, or it has become to her an abhorrence, since it reminds her of the fact that she was betrayed. Try it now, say to such a girl, "Thou art consuming thyself," and

thou shalt hear her reply, "Oh, no, the torment is precisely this, that I cannot do it."

To despair over oneself, in despair to will to be rid of oneself, is the formula for all despair, and hence the second form of despair (in despair at willing to be oneself) can be followed back to the first (in despair at not willing to be oneself), just as in the foregoing we resolved the first into the second (cf. I). A despairing man wants despairingly to be himself. But if he despairingly wants to be himself, he will not want to get rid of himself. Yes, so it seems; but if one inspects more closely, one perceives that after all the contradiction is the same. That self which he despairingly wills to be is a self which he is not (for to will to be that self which one truly is, is indeed the opposite of despair); what he really wills is to tear his self away from the Power which constituted it. But notwithstanding all his despair, this he is unable to do, notwithstanding all the efforts of despair, that Power is the stronger, and it compells him to be the self he does not will to be. But for all that he wills to be rid of himself, to be rid of the self which he is, in order to be the self he himself has chanced to choose. To be *self* as he wills to be would be his delight (though in another sense it would be equally in despair), but to be compelled to be *self* as he does not will to be is

his torment, namely, that he cannot get rid of himself.

Socrates proved the immortality of the soul from the fact that the sickness of the soul (sin) does not consume it as sickness of the body consumes the body. So also we can demonstrate the eternal in man from the fact that despair cannot consume his self, that this precisely is the torment of contradiction in despair. If there were nothing eternal in a man, he could not despair; but if despair could consume his self, there would still be no despair.

Thus it is that despair, this sickness in the self, is the sickness unto death. The despairing man is mortally ill. In an entirely different sense than can appropriately be said of any disease, we may say that the sickness has attacked the noblest part; and yet the man cannot die. Death is not the last phase of the sickness, but death is continually the last. To be delivered from this sickness by death is an impossibility, for the sickness and its torment ...and death consist in not being able to die.

This is the situation in despair. And however thoroughly it eludes the attention of the despairer, and however thoroughly the despairer may succeed (as in the case of that kind of despair which is characterized by unawareness of being in despair) in losing himself entirely, and losing himself in such a way that it

is not noticed in the least—eternity nevertheless will make it manifest that his situation was despair, and it will so nail him to himself that the torment nevertheless remains that he cannot get rid of himself, and it becomes manifest that he was deluded in thinking that he succeeded. And thus it is eternity must act, because to have a self, to be a self, is the greatest concession made to man, but at the same time it is eternity's demand upon him.

II. THE UNIVERSALITY OF THIS SICKNESS (SIN)

JUST as the physician might say that there lives perhaps not one single man who is in perfect health, so one might say perhaps that there lives not one single man who after all is not to some extent in despair, in whose inmost parts there does not dwell a disquietude, a perturbation, a discord, an anxious dread of an unknown something, or of a something he does not even dare to make acquaintance with, dread of a possibility of life, or dread of himself, so that, after all, as physicians speak of a man going about with a disease in him, this man is going about and carrying a sickness of the spirit, which only rarely and in glimpses, by and with a dread which to him is inexplicable, gives evidence of its presence within. At any rate there has lived no one and there lives no one outside of Christendom who is not in despair, and no one in Christendom, unless he be a true Christian, and if he is not quite that, he is somewhat in despair after all.

This view will doubtless seem to many a paradox, an exaggeration, and a gloomy and depressing view at that. Yet it is nothing of the sort. It is not gloomy; on the contrary, it seeks

to throw light upon a subject which ordinarily is left in obscurity. It is not depressing; on the contrary it is uplifting, since it views every man in the aspect of the highest demand made upon him, that he be spirit. Nor is it a paradox; on the contrary, it is a fundamental apprehension consistently carried through, and hence it is no exaggeration.

On the other hand, the ordinary view of despair remains content with appearances, and so it is a superficial view, that is, no view at all. It assumes that every man must know by himself better than anyone else whether he is in despair or not. So whoever says that he is in despair is regarded as being in despair, but whoever thinks he is not in despair is not so regarded. Consequently despair becomes a rather rare phenomenon, whereas in fact it is quite universal. It is not a rare exception that one is in despair; no, the rare, the very rare exception is that one is not in despair.

But the vulgar view has a very poor understanding of despair. Among other things (to mention only one which, if rightly understood, would bring thousands, yea, millions under this category), it completely overlooks the fact that one form of despair is precisely this of not being in despair, that is, not being aware of it. The vulgar view is exposed, though in a much deeper sense, to the same fallacy it sometimes

falls into when it would determine whether a man is sick or not. In a much deeper sense, I say, for the vulgar view has a far more inadequate notion of spirit than of sickness and health—and without understanding spirit it is impossible to understand despair. It is ordinarily assumed that a man is well when he does not himself say that he is sick, and still more confidently when he says that he is well. The physician on the other hand regards sickness differently. And why? Because he has a definite and well thought out conception of what it is to be in sound health, and by this he tests the man's condition. The physician knows that just as there is sickness which is only imaginary, so also there is such a thing as fictitious health. In the latter case, therefore, the physician first employs medicines to cause the disease to become manifest. Generally the physician, just because he is a physician, i.e. the competent man, has no unconditional faith in a person's own assertion about the state of his health. If it were true that what every man says about the state of his health (as to whether he is sick or well, where he suffers, etc.) were absolutely to be relied upon, it would be an illusion to be a physician. For a physician does not merely have to prescribe medicines, but first and foremost he has to be acquainted with sickness, and so first and foremost to know

whether a supposedly sick man really is sick, or whether a supposedly well man is not really sick. So it is also with the physician of souls when dealing with despair. He knows what despair is, he is acquainted with it, and hence he is not satisfied with a man's assertion that he is in despair or that he is not. For it must be observed that in a certain sense not even all who say they are in despair always are so. One may affect despair, and one may make a mistake and confuse despair with all sorts of transitory dejection or grief which pass away without coming to the point of despair. However, the physician of souls does, it is true, regard these states also as forms of despair. He perceives very well that this is affectation—but precisely this affectation is despair. He perceives very well that this dejection etc. does not mean much—but precisely this fact, that it does not mean much, is despair.

Furthermore, the vulgar view overlooks the fact that, as compared with sickness, despair is much more dialectical than what is commonly called sickness, because it is a sickness of the spirit. And this dialectical quality, rightly understood, again brings thousands under the category of despair. For in case at a given moment a physician is convinced that this or that person is in good health and at a later moment becomes sick—the physician may be right in

affirming that the person *was* well then, and at a later moment became sick. With despair it is different. As soon as despair manifests itself in a person, it is manifest that the person was in despair. For this reason one cannot at a given moment decide anything about a person who is not saved by the fact that he has been in despair. For in case the condition comes about which brings him to despair, it is at that same moment manifest that he has been in despair throughout the whole of his previous life. On the other hand, one is by no means justified in saying, when a man has a fever, that he has had a fever throughout his whole life. But despair is a phenomenon of the spirit, is related to the eternal, and therefore has something of the eternal in its dialectic.

Not only is despair far more dialectical than an illness, but all its symptoms are dialectical, and for this reason the superficial view is so readily deceived in determining whether despair is present or not. For not to be in despair may mean to be in despair, and it may also mean to be delivered from being in despair. A sense of security and tranquillity may mean that one is in despair, precisely this security, this tranquillity, may be despair, and it may mean that one has overcome despair and gained peace. In this respect despair is unlike bodily sickness; for not to be sick cannot pos-

sibly mean to be sick; but not to be despairing may mean precisely to be despairing. It is not true of despair, as it is of bodily sickness, that the feeling of indisposition is the sickness. By no means. The feeling of indisposition is again dialectical. Never to have been sensible of this indisposition is precisely to be in despair.

This points to the fact, and has its ground therein, that man, regarded as spirit, is always in a critical condition—and if one is to talk of despair, one must conceive of man as spirit. In relation to sickness we talk of a crisis, but not in relation to health. And why not? Because bodily health is an "immediate" qualification, and only becomes dialectical in sickness, when one can speak of the crisis But spiritually, or when man is regarded as spirit, both health and sickness are critical. There is no such thing as "immediate" health of the spirit.

So long as one does not regard man as spirit (in which case we cannot talk about despair) but only as a synthesis of soul and body, health is an "immediate" determinant, and only the sickness of soul or body is a dialectical determinant. But despair is expressed precisely by the fact that a person is unaware of being characterized as spirit. Even that which, humanly speaking, is the most beautiful and lovable thing of all, a feminine youthfulness which is sheer peace and harmony and joy—even that

is despair. For this indeed is happiness, but happiness is not a characteristic of spirit, and in the remote depths, in the most inward parts, in the hidden recesses of happiness, there dwells also the anxious dread which is despair; it would be only too glad to be allowed to remain therein, for the dearest and most attractive dwelling-place of despair is in the very heart of immediate happiness. All immediacy, in spite of its illusory peace and tranquillity, is dread, and hence, quite consistently, it is dread of nothing; one cannot make immediacy so anxious by the most horrifying description of the most dreadful something, as by a crafty, apparently casual half word about an unknown peril which is thrown out with the surely calculated aim of reflection; yea, one can put immediacy most in dread by slyly imputing to it knowledge of the matter referred to. For immediacy doubtless does not know; but never does reflection catch its prey so surely as when it makes its snare out of nothing, and never is reflection so thoroughly itself as when it is... nothing. There is need of an eminent reflection, or rather of a great faith, to support a reflection based upon nothing, i.e. an infinite reflection. So even the most beautiful and lovable thing of all, a feminine youthfulness which is sheer peace and harmony and joy, is nevertheless despair, is happiness. Hardly will one have the

good hap to get through life on the strength of this immediacy. And if this happiness has the hap to get through, it would be of little help for it is despair. Despair, just because it is wholly dialectical, is in fact the sickness of which it holds that it is the greatest misfortune not to have had it—the true good hap to get it, although it is the most dangerous sickness of all, if one does not wish to be healed of it. In other cases one can only speak of the good fortune of being healed of a sickness, sickness itself being misfortune.

Therefore it is as far as possible from being true that the vulgar view is right in assuming that despair is a rarity; on the contrary, it is quite universal. It is as far as possible from being true that the vulgar view is right in assuming that everyone who does not think or feel that he is in despair is not so at all, and that only he is in despair who says that he is. On the contrary, one who without affectation says that he is in despair is after all a little bit nearer, a dialectical step nearer to being cured than all those who are not regarded and do not regard themselves as being in despair. But precisely this is the common situation (as the physician of souls will doubtless concede), that the majority of men live without being thoroughly conscious that they are spiritual beings —and to this is referable all the security, con-

tentment with life, etc., etc., which precisely is despair. Those, on the other hand, who say that they are in despair are generally such as have a nature so much more profound that they must become conscious of themselves as spirit, or such as by the hard vicissitudes of life and its dreadful decisions have been helped to become conscious of themselves as spirit—either one or the other, for rare is the man who truly is free from despair.

Ah, so much is said about human want and misery—I seek to understand it, I have also had some acquaintance with it at close range; so much is said about wasted lives—but only that man's life is wasted who lived on, so deceived by the joys of life or by its sorrows that he never became eternally and decisively conscious of himself as spirit, as self, or (what is the same thing) never became aware and in the deepest sense received an impression of the fact that there is a God, and that he, he himself, his self, exists before this God, this gain of infinity, which is never attained except through despair. And, oh, this misery, that so many live on and are defrauded of this most blessed of all thoughts; this misery, that people employ themselves about everything else, or, as for the masses of men, that people employ them about everything else, utilize them to generate the power for the theater of life, but never remind

them of their blessedness; that they heap them in a mass, instead of splitting them apart so that they might gain the highest thing, the only thing worth living for, and enough to live in for an eternity—it seems to me that I could weep for an eternity over the fact that such misery exists! And, oh, to my thinking this is one expression the more of the dreadfulness of this most dreadful sickness and misery, namely, its hiddenness—not only that he who suffers from it may wish to hide it and may be able to do so, to the effect that it can so dwell in a man that no one, no one whatever discovers it; no, rather that it can be so hidden in a man that he himself does not know it! And, oh, when the hour-glass has run out, the hour-glass of time, when the noise of worldliness is silenced, and the restless or the ineffectual busyness comes to an end, when everything is still about thee as it is in eternity—whether thou wast man or woman, rich or poor, dependent or independent, fortunate or unfortunate, whether thou didst bear the splendor of the crown in a lofty station, or didst bear only the labor and heat of the day in an inconspicuous lot; whether thy name shall be remembered as long as the world stands (and so was remembered as long as the world stood), or without a name thou didst cohere as nameless with the countless multitude; whether the glory which surrounded thee

surpassed all human description, or the judgment passed upon thee was the most severe and dishonoring human judgement can pass—eternity asks of thee and of every individual among these million millions only one question, whether thou hast lived in despair or not, whether thou wast in despair in such a way that thou didst not know thou wast in despair, or in such a way that thou didst hiddenly carry this sickness in thine inward parts as thy gnawing secret, carry it under thy heart as the fruit of a sinful love, or in such a way that thou, a horror to others, didst rave in despair. And if so, if thou hast lived in despair (whether for the rest thou didst win or lose), then for thee all is lost, eternity knows thee not, it never knew thee, or (even more dreadful) it knows thee as thou art known, it puts thee under arrest by thyself in despair.

III. THE FORMS OF THIS SICKNESS, i.e. OF DESPAIR

THE forms of despair must be discoverable abstractly by reflecting upon the factors which compose the self as a synthesis. The self is composed of infinity and finiteness. But the synthesis is a relationship, and it is a relationship which, though it is derived, relates itself to itself, which means freedom. The self is freedom. But freedom is the dialectical element in the terms possibility and necessity.

Principally, however, despair must be viewed under the category of consciousness: the question whether despair is conscious or not, determines the qualitative difference between despair and despair. In its concept all despair is doubtless conscious; but from this it does not follow that he in whom it exists, he to whom it can rightly be attributed in conformity with the concept, is himself conscious of it. It is in this sense that consciousness is decisive. Generally speaking, consciousness, i.e. consciousness of self, is the decisive criterion of the self. The more consciousness, the more self; the more consciousness, the more will, and the more will the more self. A man who has no will

at all is no self; the more will he has, the more consciousness of self he has also.

A. DESPAIR REGARDED IN SUCH A WAY THAT ONE DOES NOT REFLECT WHETHER IT IS CONSCIOUS OR NOT, SO THAT ONE REFLECTS ONLY UPON THE FACTORS OF THE SYNTHESIS.

(a). *Despair viewed under the aspects of Finitude/Infinitude.*

The self is the conscious synthesis of infinitude and finitude which relates itself to itself, whose task is to become itself, a task which can be performed only by means of a relationship to God. But to become oneself is to become concrete. But to become concrete means neither to become finite nor infinite, for that which is to become concrete is a synthesis. Accordingly, the development consists in moving away from oneself infinitely by the process of infinitizing oneself, and in returning to oneself infinitely by the process of finitizing. If on the contrary the self does not become itself, it is in despair, whether it knows it or not. However, a self, every instant it exists, is in process of becoming, for the self κατὰ δύναμιν does not actually exist, it is only that which it is to become. In so far as the self does not become itself, it is not its own self; but not to be one's own self is despair.

(1). The Despair of Infinitude
is due to the lack of Finitude.

The truth of this is inherent in the dialectical fact that the self is a synthesis [of two factors], the one of which is constantly the opposite of the other. No kind of despair can be defined directly (i.e. undialectically), but only by reflecting upon the opposite factor. The despairing person's condition of despair can be directly described, as the poet does in fact by attributing to him the appropriate lines. But to describe despair is possible only by its opposite; and if the lines are to have poetic value, they must contain in their coloring a reflection of the dialectical opposite. So then every human existence which supposedly has become or merely wills to become infinite is despair. For the self is a synthesis in which the finite is the limiting factor, and the infinite is the expanding factor. Infinitude's despair is therefore the fantastical, the limitless. The self is in sound health and free from despair only when, precisely by having been in despair, it is grounded transparently in God.

The fantastical is doubtless most closely related to fantasy, imagination, but imagination in turn is related to feeling, knowledge, and will, so that a person may have a fantastic feeling, or knowledge, or will. Generally speaking,

imagination is the medium of the process of infinitizing; it is not one faculty on a par with others, but, if one would so speak, it is the faculty *instar omnium*. What feeling, knowledge, or will a man has, depends in the last resort upon what imagination he has, that is to say, upon how these things are reflected, i.e. it depends upon imagination. Imagination is the reflection of the process of infinitizing, and hence the elder Fichte quite rightly assumed, even in relation to knowledge, that imagination is the origin of the categories. The self is reflection, and imagination is reflection, it is the counterfeit presentment of the self, which is the possibility of the self. Imagination is the possibility of all reflection, and the intensity of this medium is the possibility of the intensity of the self.

Generally the fantastical is that which so carries a man out into the infinite that it merely carries him away from himself and therewith prevents him from returning to himself.

So when feeling becomes fantastic, the self is simply volatilized more and more, at last becoming a sort of abstract sentimentality which is so inhuman that it does not apply to any person, but inhumanly participates feelingly, so to speak, in the fate of one or another abstraction, e.g. that of mankind *in abstracto*. As the sufferer from rheumatism is unable to

master his physical feelings which are under the sway of wind and weather, with the result that he is involuntarily aware of a change in the air etc., so it is with him whose feeling has become fantastic; he becomes in a way infinitized, but not in such a way that he becomes more and more himself, for he loses himself more and more.

So it is with knowledge when it becomes fantastic. The law for the development of the self with respect to knowledge, in so far as it is true that the self becomes itself, is this, that the increasing degree of knowledge corresponds with the degree of self-knowledge, that the more the self knows, the more it knows itself. If this does not occur, then the more knowledge increases, the more it becomes a kind of inhuman knowing for the production of which man's self is squandered, pretty much as men were squandered for the building of the Pyramids, or as men were squandered in the Russian horn-bands to produce one note, neither more nor less.[5]

When the will becomes fantastic, the self likewise is volatilized more and more. In this case the will does not constantly become concrete in the same degree that it is abstract, in such a way that the more it is infinitized in purpose and resolution, the more present and contemporaneous with itself does it become in

the small part of the task which can be realized at once, so that in being infinitized it returns in the strictest sense to its self, so that what is *farthest* from itself (when it is most infinitized in purpose and resolution) is in the same instant *nearest* to itself in accomplishing the infinitely small part of the task which can be done even today, even at this hour, even at this instant.

And when feeling, or knowledge, or will have thus become fantastic, the entire self may at last become so, whether in a more active form, as when a man runs headlong into the fantastic, or in a more passive form, when he is carried away, but in either case with moral responsibility. The self thus leads a fantastic existence in abstract endeavor after infinity, or in abstract isolation, constantly lacking itself, from which it merely gets further and further away. So, for example, in the religious sphere. The God-relationship infinitizes; but this may so carry a man away that it becomes an inebriation, it may seem to a man as though it were unendurable to exist before God—for the reason that a man cannot return to himself, cannot become himself. Such a fantastic religious individual would say (to characterize him by putting into his mouth these lines), "That a sparrow can live is comprehensible; it does not know anything about existing before

God. But to know that one exists before God—and then not to go crazy or be brought to naught!"[6]

But in spite of the fact that a man has become fantastic in this fashion, he may nevertheless (although most commonly it becomes manifest) be perfectly well able to live on, to be a man, as it seems, to occupy himself with temporal things, get married, beget children, win honor and esteem—and perhaps no one notices that in a deeper sense he lacks a self. About such a thing as that not much fuss is made in the world; for a self is the thing the world is least apt to inquire about, and the thing of all things the most dangerous for a man to let people notice that he has it. The greatest danger, that of losing one's own self, may pass off as quietly as if it were nothing; every other loss, that of an arm, a leg, five dollars, a wife, etc., is sure to be noticed.

(2). The Despair of Finitude
is due to the lack of Infinitude.

The truth of this (as was shown under 1) is inherent in the dialectical fact that the self is a synthesis [of two factors], one of which is the opposite of the other.

The lack of infinitude means to be desperately narrow-minded and mean-spirited. Here of course it is only a question of ethical meanness

and narrowness. The world really never talks of any narrowness but intellectual or aesthetic narrowness—or about the indifferent, which is always the principal subject of the world's talk; for worldliness means precisely attributing infinite value to the indifferent. The worldly view always clings fast to the difference between man and man, and naturally it has no understanding of the one thing needful (for to have that is spirituality), and therefore no understanding of the narrowness and meanness of mind which is exemplified in having lost one's self—not by evaporation in the infinite, but by being entirely finitized, by having become, instead of a self, a number, just one man more, one more repetition of this everlasting *Einerlei*

Despairing narrowness consists in the lack of primitiveness, or of the fact one has deprived oneself of one's primitiveness; it consists in having emasculated oneself, in a spiritual sense. For every man is primitively planned to be a self, appointed to become oneself; and while it is true that every self as such is angular, the logical consequence of this merely is that it has to be polished, not that it has to be ground smooth, not that for fear of men it has to give up entirely being itself, nor even that for fear of men it dare not be itself in its essential accidentality (which precisely is what should not be ground away), by which in fine it is itself.

But while one sort of despair plunges wildly into the infinite and loses itself, a second sort permits itself as it were to be defrauded by "the others." By seeing the multitude of men about it, by getting engaged in all sorts of worldly affairs, by becoming wise about how things go in this world, such a man forgets himself, forgets what his name is (in the divine understanding of it), does not dare to believe in himself, finds it too venturesome a thing to be himself, far easier and safer to be like the others, to become an imitation, a number, a cipher in the crowd.

This form of despair is hardly ever noticed in the world. Such a man, precisely by losing his self in this way, has gained perfectibility in adjusting himself to business, yea, in making a success in the world. Here there is no hindrance, no difficulty, occasioned by his self and his infinitization, he is ground smooth as a pebble, *courant* as a well-used coin. So far from being considered in despair, he is just what a man ought to be. In general the world has of course no understanding of what is truly dreadful. The despair which not only occasions no embarrassment but makes one's life easy and comfortable is naturally not regarded as despair. That this is the view of the world can also be seen in almost all the proverbs, which are merely rules for shrewd behavior. It is said, for example,

that a man ten times regrets having spoken, for the once he regrets his silence. And why? Because the fact of having spoken is an external fact, which may involve one in annoyances, since it is an actuality. But the fact of having kept silent! Yet this is the most dangerous thing of all. For by keeping silent one is relegated solely to oneself, no actuality comes to a man's aid by punishing him, by bringing down upon him the consequences of his speech. No, in this respect, to be silent is the easy way. But he who knows what the dreadful is, must for this very reason be most fearful of every fault, of every sin, which takes an inward direction and leaves no outward trace. So it is too that in the eyes of the world it is dangerous to venture. And why? Because one may lose. But not to venture is shrewd. And yet, by not venturing, it is so dreadfully easy to lose that which it would be difficult to lose in even the most venturesome venture, and in any case never so easily, so completely as if it were nothing... one's self. For if I have ventured amiss—very well, then life helps me by its punishment. But if I have not ventured at all—who then helps me? And, moreover, if by not venturing at all in the highest sense (and to venture in the highest sense is precisely to become conscious of oneself) I have gained all earthly advantages...and lose my self! What of that?

And thus it is precisely with the despair of finitude. In spite of the fact that a man is in despair he can perfectly well live on in the temporal, in fact all the better for it; he may be praised by men, be honored and esteemed, and pursue all the aims of temporal life. What is called worldliness is made up of just such men, who (if one may use the expression) pawn themselves to the world. They use their talents, accumulate money, carry on worldly affairs, calculate shrewdly, etc., etc., are perhaps mentioned in history, but themselves they are not; spiritually understood, they have no self, no self for whose sake they could venture everything, no self before God—however *self*ish they may be for all that.

(b). *Despair viewed under the aspects of Possibility/Necessity.*

For the purpose of becoming (and it is the task of the self freely to become itself) possibility and necessity are equally essential. Just as infinitude and finitude (*ἄπειρον πέρας*)* both belong to the self, so also do possibility and necessity. A self which has no possibility is in despair, and so in turn is the self which has no necessity.

* The limitless/the finite—important terms in Plato's philosophy, especially in his Philebus, 30.

(1). The Despair of Possibility
is due to the lack of Necessity.

The truth of this proposition, as was shown, is inherent in the dialectical situation.

Just as finitude is the limiting factor in relation to infinitude, so in relation to possibility it is necessity which serves as a check. When the self as a synthesis of finitude and infinitude is once constituted, when already it *is* κατὰ δύναμιν, then in order to *become* it reflects itself in the medium of imagination, and with that the infinite possibility comes into view. The self κατὰ δύναμιν is just as possible as it is necessary; for though it is itself, it has to become itself. Inasmuch as it is itself, it is the necessary, and inasmuch as it has to become itself, it is a possibility.

Now if possibility outruns necessity, the self runs away from itself, so that it has no necessity whereto it is bound to return—then this is the despair of possibility. The self becomes an abstract possibility which tires itself out with floundering in the possible, but does not budge from the spot, nor get to any spot, for precisely the necessary is the spot; to become oneself is precisely a movement at the spot. To become is a movement from the spot, but to become oneself is a movement at the spot.

Possibility then appears to the self ever greater and greater, more and more things be-

come possible, because nothing becomes actual. At last it is as if everything were possible —but this is precisely when the abyss has swallowed up the self. Every little possibility even would require some time to become actuality. But finally the time which should be available for actuality becomes shorter and shorter, everything becomes more and more instantaneous. Possibility becomes more and more intense—but only in the sense of possibility, not in the sense of actuality; for in the sense of actuality the meaning of intensity is that at least something of that which is possible becomes actual. At the instant something appears possible, and then a new possibility makes its appearance, at last this phantasmagoria moves so rapidly that it is as if everything were possible—and this is precisely the last moment, when the individual becomes for himself a mirage.

What the self now lacks is surely reality—so one would commonly say, as one says of a man that he has become unreal. But upon closer inspection it is really necessity the man lacks. For it is not true, as the philosophers explain, that necessity is a unity of possibility and actuality; no, actuality is a unity of possibility and necessity. Nor is it merely due to lack of strength when the soul goes astray in possibility —at least this is not to be understood as people

commonly understand it. What really is lacking is the power to obey, to submit to the necessary in oneself, to what may be called one's limit. Therefore the misfortune does not consist in the fact that such a self did not amount to anything in the world; no, the misfortune is that the man did not become aware of himself, aware that the self he is, is a perfectly definite something, and so is the necessary. On the contrary, he lost himself, owing to the fact that this self was seen fantastically reflected in the possible. Even in looking at one's *self* in a mirror it is requisite to know oneself; for, if not, one does not behold one's *self* but merely a man. But the mirror of possibility is not an ordinary mirror, it must be used with the utmost precaution. For of this mirror it is true in the highest sense that it is a false mirror. That the self looks so and so in the possibility of itself is only half truth; for in the possibility of itself the self is still far from itself, or only half itself. So the question is how the necessity of the self determines it more precisely. A case analogous to possibility is when a child is invited to participate in some pleasure or another: the child is at once willing, but now it is a question whether the parents will permit it—and as with the parents, so it is with necessity.

In possibility, however, everything is possible. Hence in possibility one can go astray in

all possible ways, but essentially in two. One form is the wishful, yearning form, the other is the melancholy fantastic—on the one hand hope; on the other, fear or anguished dread. Fairy-tales and legends so often relate that a knight suddenly perceived a rare bird, which he continues to run after, since at the beginning it seemed as if it were so very near—but then it flies off again, until at last night falls, and he has become separated from his companions, being unable to find his way in the wilderness where he now is. So it is with the possibility of the wish. Instead of summoning back possibility into necessity, the man pursues the possibility—and at last he cannot find his way back to himself.—In the melancholy form the opposite result is reached in the same way. The individual pursues with melancholy love a possibility of agonizing dread, which at last leads him away from himself, so that he perishes in the dread, or perishes in that in which he was in dread of perishing.

(2). The Despair of Necessity
is due to the lack of Possibility.

If one will compare the tendency to run wild in possibility with the efforts of a child to enunciate words, the lack of possibility is like being dumb. Necessity is like a sequence of consonants only, but in order to utter them

there must in addition be possibility. When this is lacking, when a human existence is brought to the pass that it lacks possibility, it is in despair, and every instant it lacks possibility it is in despair.[7]

One commonly thinks that there is a certain age which is especially rich in hope, or one talks about being or having been at a certain period or a particular moment of one's life so rich in hope and possibility. All this is merely human talk, which never reaches the truth. All this hoping and all this despairing is not yet the true hope and the true despair.

The decisive thing is, that for God all things are possible. This is eternally true, and true therefore every instant. This is commonly enough recognized in a way, and in a way it is commonly affirmed; but the decisive affirmation comes only when a man is brought to the utmost extremity, so that humanly speaking no possibility exists. Then the question is whether he will believe that for God all things are possible—that is to say, whether he will *believe*. But this is completely the formula for losing one's mind or understanding; to believe is precisely to lose one's understanding in order to win God. Suppose it occurs as follows. Picture a man who with all the shuddering revolt of a terrified imagination has represented to himself some horror as a thing absolutely not to be

endured. Now it befalls him, precisely this horror befalls him. Humanly speaking his destruction is the most certain of all things—and the despair in his soul fights desperately to get leave to despair, to get, if you will, repose for despair, the consent of his whole personality to despair, so that he would curse nothing and nobody more fiercely than him who attempted (or it may be the attempt) to prevent him from despairing, as the poet's poet so capitally, so incomparably expresses it in *Richard II*, Act 3, Scene 2:

> Beshrew thee, cousin, which didst lead me
> forth
> Of that sweet way I was in to despair.

So then, salvation is humanly speaking the most impossible thing of all; but for God all things are possible! This is the fight of *faith*, which fights madly (if one would so express it) for possibility. For possibility is the only power to save. When one swoons people shout for water, *Eau-de-Cologne*, Hoffman's Drops; but when one is about to despair the cry is, Procure me possibility, procure possibility! Possibility is the only saving remedy; given a possibility, and with that the desperate man breathes once more, he revives again; for without possibility a man cannot, as it were, draw breath. Sometimes the inventiveness of a human imagina-

tion suffices to procure possibility, but in the last resort, that is, when the point is to *believe*, the only help is this, that for God all things are possible.

Thus is the fight carried on. Whether he who is engaged in this fight will be defeated, depends solely and alone upon whether he has the will to procure for himself possibility, that is to say, whether he will believe. And yet he understands that humanly speaking his destruction is the most certain thing of all. This is the dialectical character of faith. For the most part a man knows no more than that this or that, as he has reason to hope, as seems probable, etc., will not befall him. If it befalls him, then he succumbs. The foolhardy man plunges into a danger involving this or that possibility; if it befalls him, he despairs and succumbs. The *believer* perceives and understands, humanly speaking, his destruction (in what has befallen him and in what he has ventured), but he believes. Therefore he does not succumb. He leaves it wholly to God how he is to be helped, but he believes that for God all things are possible. To *believe* in his own destruction is impossible. To understand that, humanly, it is his own destruction, and then nevertheless to believe in the possibility, is what is meant by faith. So then God helps him—perhaps by

letting him escape the terror, perhaps by means of the terror—in the fact that here, unexpectedly, miraculously, divinely, help appears. Miraculously—for it is a strange pedantry to assume that only eighteen hundred years ago it could occur that a man was helped miraculously. Whether a man has been helped by a miracle depends essentially upon the degree of intellectual passion he has employed to understand that help was impossible, and next upon how honest he is toward the Power which helped him nevertheless. But usually it is neither the one thing nor the other: men cry that there is no help, without having strained the understanding to find help, and afterwards they lie ungratefully.

The believer possesses the eternally certain antidote to despair, viz. possibility; for with God all things are possible every instant. This is the sound health of faith which resolves contradictions. The contradiction in this case is that, humanly speaking, destruction is certain, and that nevertheless there is possibility. Health consists essentially in being able to resolve contradictions. So it is bodily or physically: a draft is indifferently cold and warm, disparate qualities undialectically combined; but a healthy body resolves this contradiction and does not notice the draft. So it is also with faith.

The loss of possibility signifies: either that everything has become necessary to a man /or that everything has become trivial.

The determinist or the fatalist is in despair, and in despair he has lost his self, because for him everything is necessary. He is like that king who died of hunger because all his food was transformed into gold. Personality is a synthesis of possibility and necessity. The condition of its survival is therefore analogous to breathing (respiration), which is an in- and an a-spiration. The self of the determinist cannot breathe, for it is impossible to breathe necessity alone, which taken pure and simple suffocates the human self.

The fatalist is in despair—he has lost God, and therefore himself as well; for if he has no God, neither has he a self. But the fatalist has no God—or, what is the same thing, his god is necessity. Inasmuch as for God all things are possible, it may be said that this is what God is, viz. one for whom all things are possible. The worship of the fatalist is therefore at its maximum an exclamation, and essentially it is dumbness, dumb submission, he is unable to pray. So to pray is to breathe, and possibility is for the self what oxygen is for breathing. But for possibility alone or for necessity alone to supply the conditions for the breathing of prayer is no more possible than it is for a man

to breathe oxygen alone or nitrogen alone. For in order to pray there must be a God, there must be a self plus possibility, or a self and possibility in the pregnant sense; for God *is* that all things are possible, and that all things are possible *is* God; and only the man whose being has been so shaken that he became spirit by understanding that all things are possible, only he has had dealings with God. The fact that God's will is the possible makes it possible for me to pray; if God's will is only the necessary, man is essentially as speechless as the brutes.

In the case of philistinism or triviality, which also lacks possibility, the situation is somewhat different. Philistinism is spiritlessness, in the literal sense of the word; determinism and fatalism are spiritual despair; but such spiritlessness is also despair. Philistinism lacks every determinant of spirit and terminates in probability, within which the possible finds its insignificant place. Thus it lacks sufficient possibility to take notice of God. Devoid of imagination, as the Philistine always is, he lives in a certain trivial province of experience as to how things go, what is possible, what usually occurs. Thus the Philistine has lost his self and God. For in order to be aware of oneself and God imagination must enable a man to soar higher than the misty precinct of the probable,

it must wrench one out of this and, by making possible that which transcends the *quantum satis* of every experience, it must teach him to hope and fear, or to fear and hope. But imagination the Philistine does not possess, he does not want to have it, he abhors it. So here there is no help. And if sometimes reality helps by terrors which transcend the parrot-wisdom of trivial experience, then philistinism despairs—that is, it becomes manifest that it was in despair. It lacks the possibility of faith in order by God's help to be able to deliver itself from certain destruction.

Fatalism and determinism, however, have enough imagination to despair of possibility, and have possibility enough to discover impossibility. Philistinism tranquilizes itself in the trivial, being equally in despair whether things go well or ill. Fatalism or determinism lacks the possibility of relaxing and soothing, of tempering necessity, and so it lacks possibility as assuagement. Philistinism lacks possibility as revival from spiritlessness. For philistinism thinks it is in control of possibility, it thinks that when it has decoyed this prodigious elasticity into the field of probability or into the mad-house it holds it a prisoner; it carries possibility around like a prisoner in the cage of the probable, shows it off, imagines itself to be the master, does not take note that

precisely thereby it has taken itself captive to be the slave of spiritlessness and to be the most pitiful of all things. For with the audacity of despair that man soared aloft who ran wild in possibility; but crushed down by despair that man strains himself against existence to whom everything has become necessary. But philistinism spiritlessly celebrates its triumph.

B. DESPAIR VIEWED UNDER THE ASPECT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

With every increase in the degree of consciousness, and in proportion to that increase, the intensity of despair increases: the more consciousness, the more intense the despair. This is everywhere to be seen, most clearly in the maximum and minimum of despair. The devil's despair is the most intense despair, for the devil is sheer spirit, and therefore absolute consciousness and transparency; in the devil there is no obscurity which might serve as a mitigating excuse, his despair is therefore absolute defiance. This is the maximum of despair. The minimum of despair is a state which (as one might humanly be tempted to express it) by reason of a sort of innocence does not even know that there is such a thing as despair. So when consciousness is at its minimum the despair is least; it is almost as if it were a dialecti-

cal problem whether one is justified in calling such a state despair.

(a). *The Despair which is Unconscious that it is Despair, or the Despairing Unconsciousness of having a Self and an Eternal Self*

That this condition is nevertheless despair and is rightly so denominated may be taken as an expression for a trait which we may call, in a good sense, the opinionativeness of truth. *Veritas est index sui et falsi.*[8] But this opinionativeness of truth is, to be sure, held in scant honor, as also it is far from being the case that men in general regard relationship to the truth, the fact of standing in relationship to the truth, as the highest good, and it is very far from being the case that they, Socratically, regard being under a delusion as the greatest misfortune;[9] their sensuous nature is generally predominant over their intellectuality. So when a man is supposed to be happy, he imagines that he is happy (whereas viewed in the light of the truth he is unhappy), and in this case he is generally very far from wishing to be torn away from that delusion. On the contrary, he becomes furious, he regards the man who does this as his most spiteful enemy, he considers it an insult, something near to murder, in the sense that one speaks of killing joy. What is the reason of this? The reason is that the sensuous nature and the

psycho-sensuous completely dominate him; the reason is that he lives in the sensuous categories agreeable / disagreeable, and says goodbye to truth etc.; the reason is that he is too sensuous to have the courage to venture to be spirit or to endure it. However vain and conceited men may be, they have nevertheless for the most part a very lowly conception of themselves, that is to say, they have no conception of being spirit, the absolute of all that a man can be—but vain and conceited they are...by way of comparison. In case one were to think of a house, consisting of cellar, ground-floor and *premier étage*, so tenanted, or rather so arranged, that it was planned for a distinction of rank between the dwellers on the several floors; and in case one were to make a comparison between such a house and what it is to be a man—then unfortunately this is the sorry and ludicrous condition of the majority of men, that in their own house they prefer to live in the cellar. The soulish-bodily synthesis in every man is planned with a view to being spirit, such is the building; but the man prefers to dwell in the cellar, that is, in the determinants of sensuousness. And not only does he prefer to dwell in the cellar; no, he loves that to such a degree that he becomes furious if anyone would propose to him to occupy the *bel étage* which stands

empty at his disposition—for in fact he is dwelling in his own house.

No, to be in error or delusion is (quite un-Socratically) the thing they fear the least. One may behold amazing examples which illustrate this fact on a prodigious scale. A thinker erects an immense building, a system, a system which embraces the whole of existence and world-history etc.—and if we contemplate his personal life, we discover to our astonishment this terrible and ludicrous fact, that he himself personally does not live in this immense high-vaulted palace, but in a barn alongside of it, or in a dog kennel, or at the most in the porter's lodge. If one were to take the liberty of calling his attention to this by a single word, he would be offended. For he has no fear of being under a delusion, if only he can get the system completed...by means of the delusion.

So then, the fact that the man in despair is unaware that his condition is despair, has nothing to do with the case, he is in despair all the same. If despair is bewilderment (*Forvildelse*), then the fact that one is unconscious of it is the additional aggravation of being at the same time under a delusion (*Vildfarelse*). Unconsciousness of despair is like unconsciousness of dread (cf. *The Concept of Dread* by Vigilius Haufniensis): the dread characteristic of spiritlessness is recognizable precisely by the

spiritless sense of security; but nevertheless dread is at the bottom of it, and when the enchantment of illusion is broken, when existence begins to totter, then too does despair manifest itself as that which was at the bottom.

The despairing man who is conscious of being in despair is, in comparison with him who is unconscious of it, merely a negative step further from the truth and from salvation. Despair itself is a negativity, unconsciousness of it is a new negativity. But to reach truth one must pierce through every negativity. For here applies what the fairy-tale recounts about a certain enchantment: the piece of music must be played through backwards; otherwise the enchantment is not broken.[10] However, it is only in one sense, in a purely dialectical sense, that he who is unconscious of despair is further away from truth and salvation than the man who is conscious of his despair and yet remains in it. For in another sense, an ethical-dialectic sense, the despairing man who consciously remains in despair is further from salvation, since his despair is more intense. But unawareness is so far from removing despair, or of transforming despair into non-despair, that, on the contrary, it may be the most dangerous form of despair. By unconsciousness the despairing man is in a way secured (but to his own de-

struction) against becoming aware—that is, he is securely in the power of despair.

In unconsciousness of being in despair a man is furthest from being conscious of himself as spirit. But precisely the thing of not being conscious of oneself as spirit is despair, which is spiritlessness—whether the condition be that of complete deadness, a merely vegetative life, or a life of higher potency the secret of which is nevertheless despair. In the latter instance the man is like the sufferer from consumption: he feels well, considers himself in the best of health, seems perhaps to others to be in florid health, precisely when the sickness is most dangerous.

This form of despair (i.e. unconsciousness of it) is the commonest in the world—yes, in what people call the world, or, to define it more exactly, what Christianity calls "the world," i.e. paganism, and the natural man in Christendom. Paganism as it historically was and is, and paganism within Christendom, is precisely this sort of despair, it is despair but does not know it. It is true that a distinction is made also in paganism, as well as by the natural man, between being in despair and not being in despair; that is to say, people talk of despair as if only certain particular individuals were in despair. But this distinction is just as deceitful as that which paganism and the natural man

make between sexual love and self-love, as though this love were not essentially self-love. Further, however, than this deceitful distinction it was impossible for paganism, including the natural man, to go; for the specific character of despair is precisely this: it is unconscious of being despair.

From this we can easily perceive that the aesthetic concept of spiritlessness by no means furnishes the scale for judging what is despair and what is not—which moreover is a matter of course; for since it is unable to define what spirit truly is, how could the aesthetical make answer to a question which does not exist for it at all? It would also be a prodigious stupidity to deny that pagan nations *en masse*, as well as individual pagans, have performed amazing exploits which have prompted and will prompt the enthusiasm of poets; to deny that paganism exhibits examples of achievement which aesthetically cannot be sufficiently admired. It would also be foolish to deny that in paganism lives have been led which were rich in aesthetic enjoyment, and that the natural man can lead such a life, utilizing every advantage offered with the most perfect good taste, even letting art and learning enhance, embellish, ennoble the enjoyment. No, it is not the aesthetic definition of spiritlessness which furnishes the scale for judging what is despair and

what is not; the definition which must be used is the ethico-religious: either spirit/or the negative lack of spirit, spiritlessness. Every human existence which is not conscious of itself as spirit, or conscious of itself before God as spirit, every human existence which is not thus grounded transparently in God but obscurely reposes or terminates in some abstract universality (state, nation, etc.), or in obscurity about itself takes its faculties merely as active powers, without in a deeper sense being conscious whence it has them, which regards itself as an inexplicable something which is to be understood from without—every such existence, whatever it accomplishes, though it be the most amazing exploit, whatever it explains, though it were the whole of existence, however intensely it enjoys life aesthetically—every such existence is after all despair. It was this the old theologians meant when they talked about the virtues of the pagans being splendid vices.[11] They meant that the most inward experience of the pagan was despair, that the pagan was not conscious of himself before God as spirit. Hence it came about (to cite here an example which has at the same time a deeper relation to the whole study) that the pagans judged self-slaughter so lightly, yea, even praised it,[12] notwithstanding that for the spirit it is the most decisive sin, that to break out of

existence in this way is rebellion against God. The pagan lacked the spirit's definition of the self, therefore he expressed such a judgment of *self*-slaughter—and this the same pagan did who condemned with moral severity theft, unchastity, etc. He lacked the point of view for regarding self-slaughter, he lacked the God-relationship and the self. From a purely pagan point of view self-slaughter is a thing indifferent, a thing every man may do if he likes, because it concerns nobody else. If from a pagan point of view one were to warn against self-slaughter, it must be by a long detour, by showing that it was breach of duty toward one's fellow-men. The point in self-slaughter, that it is a crime against God, entirely escapes the pagan. One cannot say, therefore, that the self-slaughter was despair, which would be a thoughtless hysteron proteron; one must say that the fact that the pagan judged self-slaughter as he did was despair.

Nevertheless there is and remains a distinction, and a qualitative one, between paganism in the narrowest sense, and paganism within Christendom. The distinction (as Vigilius Haufniensis has pointed out in relation to dread) is this, that paganism, though to be sure it lacks spirit, is definitely oriented in the direction of spirit, whereas paganism within Christendom lacks spirit with a direction away from

it, or by apostacy, and hence in the strictest sense is spiritlessness.

(b). *The Despair which is Conscious of being Despair, as also it is Conscious of being a Self wherein there is after all something Eternal, and then is either in despair at not willing to be itself, or in despair at willing to be itself.*

A distinction of course must be made as to whether he who is conscious of his despair has the true conception of what despair is. Thus a man may be right, according to the conception he has, in asserting that he is in despair, it may be true that he is in despair, and yet this is not to say that he has the true conception of despair, it may be that one who contemplated this man's life in the light of the true conception would say, "You are far more in despair than you are aware, the despair lies far deeper." So with the pagan (to recall the foregoing instance), when in comparison with others he considered himself in despair, he doubtless was right in thinking that he was in despair, but he was wrong in thinking that the others were not; that is to say, he had not the true conception of despair.

So then, for conscious despair there is requisite on the one hand the true conception of what despair is. On the other hand, clearness is requisite about oneself—in so far, that is to

say, as clearness and despair are compatible. How far complete clarity about oneself, as to whether one is in despair, may be united with being in despair, whether this knowledge and self-knowledge might not avail precisely to tear a man out of his despair, to make him so terrified about himself that he would cease to be in despair—these questions we shall not decide here, we shall not even attempt to do so, since in the sequel we shall find a place for this whole investigation. But without pursuing the thought to this extremest point, we here merely call attention to the fact that, although the degree of consciousness as to what despair is may be very various, so also may be the degree of consciousness touching one's own condition, the consciousness that it is despair. Real life is far too multifarious to be portrayed by merely exhibiting such abstract contrasts as that between a despair which is completely unconscious, and one which is completely conscious of being such. Most frequently, no doubt, the condition of the despairing man, though characterized by multiform nuances, is that of a half obscurity about his own condition. He himself knows well enough in a way up to a certain point that he is in despair, he notices it in himself, as one notices in oneself that one is going about with an illness as yet unpronounced, but he will not quite admit what illness it is. At one

moment it has almost become clear to him that he is in despair; but then at another moment it appears to him after all as though his indisposition might have another ground, as though it were the consequence of something external, something outside himself, and that if this were to be changed, he would not be in despair. Or perhaps by diversions, or in other ways, e.g. by work and busy occupations as means of distraction, he seeks by his own effort to preserve an obscurity about his condition, yet again in such a way that it does not become quite clear to him that he does it for this reason, that he does what he does in order to bring about obscurity. Or perhaps he even is conscious that he labors thus in order to sink the soul into obscurity, does this with a certain acuteness and shrew calculation, with psychological insight, but is not in a deeper sense clearly conscious of what he does, of how despairingly he labors etc. For in fact there is in all obscurity a dialectical interplay of knowledge and will, and in interpreting a man one may err, either by emphasizing knowledge merely, or merely the will.

But, as was pointed out above, the degree of consciousness potentiates despair. In the same degree that a man has a truer conception of despair while still remaining in it, and in the same degree that he is more conscious of being

in despair, in that same degree is his despair more intense. He who with the consciousness that suicide is despair, and to that extent with the true conception of what despair is, then commits suicide—that man has a more intense despair than the man who commits suicide without having the true conception that suicide is despair; but, conversely, the less true his conception of suicide is, the less intense his despair. On the other hand, the clearer consciousness of himself (self-consciousness) a man has in committing suicide, the more intense is his despair, in comparison with that of the man whose soul, compared with his, is in a confused and obscure condition.

In what follows I shall go on to examine the two forms of conscious despair, in such a way as to display at the same time a heightening of the consciousness of what despair is, and of the consciousness of the fact that one's own condition is despair—or, what is the same thing and the decisive thing, a heightening of the consciousness of the self. But the opposite of being in despair is believing; hence we may perceive the justification for what was stated above (I.A) as the formula which describes a condition in which no despair at all exists, for this same formula is also the formula for believing: by relating itself to its own self, and by

willing to be itself, the self is grounded transparently in the Power which constituted it.

(1). In despair at not willing to be oneself, the despair of weakness.

When this form of despair is called the despair of weakness, there is already contained in this a reflection upon the second form (2); in despair at not willing to be oneself So the contrast here is only relative. No despair is entirely without defiance: in fact defiance is implied in the very expression, "not to will to be." On the other hand, even the extremest defiance of despair is after all never without some weakness. The difference is therefore only relative. The one form is, so to speak, the despair of womanliness, the other of manliness.

* If psychologically one will take a look around in real life, one will from time to time have opportunity to convince oneself that this distinction, which is logically correct and so shall and must be pertinent, is in fact pertinent, and that this classification embraces the whole reality of despair For so far as the child is concerned, one does not talk about despair but only about ill-temper, because one has only a right to assume that the eternal is present in the child κατὰ δύναμιν, and has never a right to demand it of the child, as one has a right to demand it of the grown man, to whom it applies that he *shall* have it However, I do not by any means wish to deny that on the part of women there may occur forms of manly despair, and conversely forms of womanly despair on the part of men But these are exceptions. And this is a matter of course, the ideal also is rare; and only in a purely ideal sense is this distinction between manly and womanly despair entirely true. Woman has neither the selfishly developed conception of the self nor the intellectuality of man, for all

(i). *Despair over the earthly or over something earthly.* This is pure immediacy, or else an immediacy which contains a quantitative reflection.—Here there is no infinite consciousness of

that she is his superior in tenderness and fineness of feeling. On the other hand, woman's nature is devotion (*Hengivenhead*), submission (*Hengivelse*), and it is unwomanly if it is not so. Strangely enough, no one can be so pert (a word which language has expressly coined for woman), so almost cruelly particular as a woman—and yet her nature is devotion, and yet (here is the marvel) all this is really the expression for the fact that her nature is devotion. For just because in her nature she carries the whole womanly devotion, nature has lovingly equipped her with an instinct, in comparison with which in point of delicacy the most eminently developed male reflection is as nothing. This devotion of woman, this (to speak as a Greek) divine dowry and riches, is too great a good to be thrown away blindly; and yet no clear-sighted manly reflection is capable of seeing sharply enough to be able to dispose of it rightly. Hence nature has taken care of her: instinctively she sees blindly with greater clarity than the most sharp-sighted reflection, instinctively she sees where it is she is to admire, what it is she ought to devote herself to. Devotion is the only thing woman has, therefore nature undertook to be her guardian. Hence it is too that womanliness first comes into existence through a metamorphosis; it comes into existence when the infinite pertness is transfigured in womanly devotion. But the fact that devotion is woman's nature comes again to evidence in despair. By devotion [the word literally means giving away] she has lost herself, and only thus is she happy, only thus is she herself; a woman who is happy without devotion, that is, without giving herself away (to whatever it may be she gives herself) is unwomanly. A man also devotes himself (gives himself away), and it is a poor sort of a man who does not do it, but his self is not devotion (this is the expression for womanly substantial devotion), nor does he acquire himself by devotion, as in another sense a woman does, he has himself; he gives himself away, but his self still remains behind as a sober consciousness of devotion, whereas woman, with genuine womanliness, plunges her self into that to which she devotes

the self, of what despair is, or of the fact that the condition is one of despair; the despair is passive, succumbing to the pressure of the outward circumstance, it by no means comes from within as action. It is, if I may say so, by an innocent misuse of language, a play upon words, as when children play at being soldiers, that in the language of immediacy such words as the self and despair occur.

The *immediate* man (in so far as immediacy is to be found without any reflection) is merely soulishly determined, his self or he himself is a something included along with "the other" in the compass of the temporal and the worldly, and it has only an illusory appearance of possessing in it something eternal. Thus the self coheres immediately with "the other," wishing, desiring, enjoying, etc., but passively; even in desiring, the self is in the dative case, like the child when it says "me" for I. Its dialectic is:

herself.—In such a way man does not devote himself; but the second form of despair expressed also the manly nature in despair at willing to be oneself.

So far with respect to the relation between the manly and the womanly despair. It must be remembered, however, that we are not speaking here of devotion to God or of the God-relationship, which is not to be dealt with till we come to Part Second. In the relationship to God, where such a distinction as man/woman vanishes, it is true of man as of woman that devotion is the self, and that by devotion the self is acquired. This is true equally for man and woman, although most frequently in real life woman is related to God only through man.

the agreeable and the disagreeable; its concepts are: good fortune, misfortune, fate.

Now then there *happens*, befalls (falls upon) this immediate self something which brings it to despair; in no other way can this come about, since the self has no reflection in itself, that which brings it to despair must come from without, and the despair is merely passive. That wherein immediacy has its being, or (supposing that after all it has a little bit of reflection in itself) that part thereof to which it especially clings, a man is deprived of by "a stroke of fate," in short, he becomes, as he calls it, unfortunate, that is, the immediacy in him receives such a shock that it cannot recover itself—he despairs. Or (to mention a case which is more rarely to be seen in real life, but which dialectically is entirely correct) this despair of immediacy occurs through what the immediate man calls an all-too-great good fortune; for it is a fact that immediacy as such is prodigiously fragile, and every *quid nimis* which demands of it reflection brings it to despair.

So then he despairs, that is to say, by a strangely preposterous attitude and a complete mystification with regard to himself, he calls this despair. But to despair is to lose the eternal—and of this he does not speak, does not dream. The loss of the earthly as such is not the cause of despair, and yet it is of this he speaks,

and he calls it despairing. What he says is in a certain sense true, only it is not true in the sense in which he understands it; he stands with his face inverted, and what he says must be understood inversely: he stands and points at that which is not a cause of despair, and he declares that he is in despair, and nevertheless it is quite true that despair is going on behind him without his knowing it. It is as if one were to stand with one's back toward the City Hall and the Court House, and pointing straight before him were to say, "There is the City Hall and the Court House." The man is right, there it is... if he turns around. It is not true, he is not in despair, and yet he is right when he says it. But he calls himself "in despair," he regards himself as dead, as a shadow of himself. But dead he is not; there is, if you will, *life* in the characterization. In case everything suddenly changes, everything in the outward circumstances, and the wish is fulfilled, then life enters into him again, immediacy rises again, and he begins to live as fit as a fiddle. But this is the only way immediacy knows how to fight, the one thing it knows how to do: to despair and swoon—and yet it knows what despair is less than anything else. It despairs and swoons, and thereupon it lies quite still as if it were dead, like the childish play of "lying dead"; immediacy is like certain lower animals which have

no other weapon or means of defense but to lie quite still and pretend they are dead.

Meanwhile time passes. If outward help comes, then life returns to the despairer, he begins where he left off; he had no self, and a self he did not become, but he continues to live on with only the quality of immediacy. If outward help does not come, then in real life something else commonly occurs. Life comes back into him after all, but "he never will be himself again," so he says. He now acquires some little understanding of life, he learns to imitate the other men, noting how they manage to live, and so he too lives after a sort. In Christendom he too is a Christian, goes to church every Sunday, hears and understands the parson, yea, they understand one another; he dies; the parson introduces him into eternity for the price of $10—but a self he was not, and a self he did not become.

This form of despair is: in despair at not willing to be oneself; or still lower, in despair at not willing to be a self; or lowest of all, in despair at willing to be another than himself. Properly speaking, immediacy has no self, it does not recognize itself, so neither can it recognize itself again, it terminates therefore preferably in the romantic. When immediacy despairs it possesses not even enough self to wish or to dream that it had become what it did not

become. The immediate man helps himself in a different way: he wishes to be another. Of this one may easily convince oneself by observing immediate men. At the moment of despair no wish is so natural to them as the wish that they had become or might become another. In any case one can never forbear to smile at such a despairer, who, humanly speaking, although he is in despair, is so very innocent. Commonly such a despairer is infinitely comic. Think of a self (and next to God there is nothing so eternal as a self), and then that this self gets the notion of asking whether it might not let itself become or be made into another...than itself. And yet such a despairer, whose only wish is this most crazy of all transformations, loves to think that this change might be accomplished as easily as changing a coat. For the immediate man does not recognize his self, he recognizes himself only by his dress, he recognizes (and here again appears the infinitely comic trait) he recognizes that he has a self only by externals. There is no more ludicrous confusion, for a self is just infinitely different from externals. When then the whole of existence has been altered for the immediate man and he has fallen into despair, he goes a step further, he thinks thus, this has become his wish: "What if I were to become another, were to get myself a new self?" Yes, but if he did become another,

I wonder if he would recognize himself again! It is related of a peasant who came cleanly shaven to the Capital, and had made so much money that he could buy himself a pair of shoes and stockings and still had enough left over to get drunk on—it is related that as he was trying in his drunken state to find his way home he lay down in the middle of the highway and fell asleep. Then along came a wagon, and the driver shouted to him to move or he would run over his legs. Then the drunken peasant awoke, looked at his legs, and since by reason of the shoes and stockings he didn't recognize them, he said to the driver, "Drive on, they are not my legs." So in the case of the immediate man when he is in despair it is impossible to represent him truly without a touch of the comic; it is, if I may say so, a clever trick to talk in this jargon about a self and about despair.

When immediacy is assumed to have self-reflection, despair is somewhat modified; there is somewhat more consciousness of the self, and therewith in turn of what despair is, and of the fact that one's condition is despair; there is some sense in it when such a man talks of being in despair: but the despair is essentially that of weakness, a passive experience; its form is, in despair at not wanting to be oneself.

The progress in this case, compared with pure immediacy, is at once evident in the fact

that the despair does not always come about by reason of a blow, by something that happens, but may be occasioned by the mere reflection within oneself, so that in this case despair is not a purely passive defeat by outward circumstances, but to a certain degree is self-activity, action. Here there is in fact a certain degree of self-reflection, and so a certain degree of observation of oneself. With this certain degree of self-reflection begins the act of discrimination whereby the self becomes aware of itself as something essentially different from the environment, from externalities and their effect upon it. But this is only to a certain degree. Now when the self with a certain degree of self-reflection wills to accept itself, it stumbles perhaps upon one difficulty or another in the composition of the self. For as no human body is perfection, so neither is any self. This difficulty, be it what it may, frightens the man away shudderingly. Or something happens to him which causes within him a breach with immediacy deeper that he has made by reflection. Or his imagination discovers a possibility which, if it were to come to pass, would likewise become a breach with immediacy.

So he despairs. His despair is that of weakness, a passive suffering of the self, in contrast to the despair of self-assertion; but, by the aid of relative self-reflection which he has, he

makes an effort (which again distinguished him from the purely immediate man) to defend his self. He understands that the thing of letting the self go is a pretty serious business after all, he is not so apoplectically muddled by the blow as the immediate man is, he understands by the aid of reflection that there is much he may lose without losing the self; he makes admissions, is capable of doing so—and why? Because to a certain degree he has dissociated his self from external circumstances, because he has an obscure conception that there may even be something eternal in the self. But in vain he struggles thus; the difficulty he stumbled against demands a breach with immediacy as a whole, and for that he has not sufficient self-reflection or ethical reflection; he has no consciousness of a self which is gained by the infinite abstraction from everything outward, this naked, abstract self (in contrast to the clothed self of immediacy) which is the first form of the infinite self and the forward impulse in the whole process whereby a self infinitely accepts its actual self with all its difficulties and advantages.

So then he despairs, and his despair is: not willing to be himself. On the other hand, it strikes him as ridiculous to want to be another; he maintains the relationship to his self—to that extent reflection has identified him with

the self. He then is in just such a situation with regard to the self as a man may be with regard to his dwelling-place. The comic feature is that a self certainly does not stand in such a casual relation to itself as does a man to his dwelling-place. A man finds his dwelling-place distasteful, either because the chimney smokes, or for any other reason whatsoever; so he leaves it, but he does not move out, he does not engage a new dwelling, he continues to regard the old one as his habitation; he reckons that the offense will pass away. So it is with the despairer. As long as the difficulty lasts he does not dare to come to himself (as the common phrase expresses it with singular pregnancy), he does not want to be himself—but that surely will pass by, perhaps things will change, the dark possibility will surely be forgotten. So meanwhile he comes to himself only once in a while, as it were on a visit, to see whether the change has not occurred, and so soon as it has occurred he moves home again, "is again himself," so he says. However, this only means that he begins again where he left off; he was to a certain degree a self of a sort, and he became nothing more.

But if no change occurs, he helps himself in another way. He swings away entirely from the inward direction which is the path he ought to have followed in order to become truly a

self. The whole problem of the self in a deeper sense becomes a sort of blind door in the background of his soul behind which there is nothing. He accepts what in his language he calls his self, that is to say, whatever abilities, talents, etc. may have been given him; all this he accepts, yet with the outward direction toward what is called life, the real, the active life; he treats with great precaution the bit of self-reflection which he has in himself, he is afraid that this thing in the background might again emerge. So little by little he succeeds in forgetting it; in the course of years he finds it almost ludicrous, especially when he is in good company with other capable and active men who have a sense and capacity for real life. *Charmant*! He has now, as they say in romances, been happily married for a number of years, is an active and enterprising man, a father and a citizen, perhaps even a great man; at home in his own house the servants speak of him as "him"; in the city he is among the *honoratiores*; his bearing suggests "respect of persons," or that he is to be respected as a person, to all appearance he is to be regarded as a person. In Christendom he is a Christian (quite in the same sense in which in paganism he would have been a pagan, and in England an Englishman), one of the cultured Christians. The question of immortality has often been in his mind,

more than once he has asked the parson whether there really was such an immortality, whether one would really recognize oneself again—which indeed must have for him a very singular interest, since he has no self.

It is impossible to represent truly this sort of despair without a certain admixture of satire. The comical thing is that he will talk about having been in despair; the dreadful thing is that after having, as he thinks, overcome despair, he is then precisely in despair. It is infinitely comic that at the bottom of the practical wisdom which is so much extolled in the world, at the bottom of all the devilish lot of good counsel and wise saws and "wait and see" and "put up with one's fate" and "write in the book of forgetfulness"—that at the bottom of all this, ideally understood, lies complete stupidity as to where the danger really is and what the danger really is. But again this ethical stupidity is the dreadful thing.

Despair over the earthly or over something earthly is the commonest sort of despair, especially in the second form of immediacy with a quantitative reflection. The more thoroughly reflected the despair is, the more rarely it occurs in the world. But this proves that most men have not become very deep even in despair; it by no means proves, however, that they are not in despair. There are very few

men who live even only passably in the category of spirit; yea, there are not many even who merely make an attempt at this life, and most of those who do so, shy away. They have not learned to fear, they have not learned what "must" means, regardless, infinitely regardless of what it may be that comes to pass. Therefore they cannot endure what even to them seems a contradiction, and which as reflected from the world around them appears much more glaring, that to be concerned for one's own soul and to want to be spirit is a waste of time, yes, an inexcusable waste of time, which ought if possible to be punishable by law, at all events is punished by contempt and ridicule as a sort of treason against men, as a froward madness which crazily fills up time with nothing. Then there is a period in their lives (alas, their best period) when they begin after all to take the inward direction. They get about as far as the first difficulties, there they veer away; it seems to them as though this road were leading to a disconsolate desert—*und rings umher liegt schöne grüne Weide.*[13] So they are off, and soon they forget that best period of theirs; and, alas, they forget it as though it were a bit of childishness. At the same time they are Christians, tranquilized by the parson with regard to their salvation. This despair, as I have said, is the commonest, it is so common that only thereby

can one explain the rather common opinion in common intercourse that despair is something belonging to youth, which appears only in youthful years, but is not to be found in the settled man who has come to the age of maturity and the years of wisdom. This is a desperate error, or rather a desperate mistake, which overlooks (yes, and what is worse, it overlooks the fact that what it overlooks is pretty nearly the best thing that can be said of a man, since far worse often occurs)—it overlooks the fact that the majority of men do never really manage in their whole life to be more than they were in childhood and youth, namely, immediacy with the addition of a little dose of self-reflection. No, despair verily is not something which appears only in the young, something out of which one grows as a matter of course—"as one grows out of illusion." But neither is illusion something one grows out of, though people are foolish enough to think so. On the contrary, one encounters grown men and women and aged persons who have as much childish illusion as any youth. People overlook the fact that illusion has essentially two forms: that of hope, and that of recollection. But just because the older person is under illusion, he has also an entirely onesided conception of what illusion is, thinking that it is only the illusion of hope. And this is natural.

The older man is not plagued by the illusion of hope, but he is on the other hand by the whimsical idea of looking down at the illusion of youth from a supposedly superior standpoint which is free from illusion. The youth is under illusion, he hopes for the extraordinary from life and from himself. By way of compensation one often finds in an older man illusion with respect to the recollections of his youth. An elderly woman who has now supposedly given up all illusions is often found to be as fantastic in her illusion as any young girl, with respect to how she remembers herself as a girl, how happy she once was, how beautiful, etc. This *fuimus*[14] which is so often heard from old people is fully as great an illusion as the futuristic illusion of the youth. They both of them are lying or poetizing.

But far more desperate than this is the mistake that despair belongs only to youth. In the main it is a great folly, and precisely it is a lack of sense as to what spirit is, and moreover it is failure to appreciate that man is spirit, not merely an animal, when one supposes that it might be such an easy matter to acquire faith and wisdom which come with the years as a matter of course, like teeth and a beard and such like. No, whatever it may be that a man as a matter of course comes to, and whatever it may be that comes to a man as a matter of

course—one thing it is not, namely, faith and wisdom. But the thing is this: with the years man does not, spiritually understood, come to anything; on the other hand, it is very easy with the years to go from something. And with the years one perhaps goes from the bit of passion, feeling, imagination, the bit of inwardness, which one had, and goes as a matter of course (for such things go as a matter of course) under triviality's definition of understanding of life. This...prearranged condition, which true enough has come about with the years, he now in despair regards as a good, he readily assures himself (and in a certain satirical sense there is nothing more sure) that it now never could occur to him to despair—no, he has assured himself against this, yet he *is* in despair, spiritually in despair. Why I wonder did Socrates love youths—unless it was because he knew men!

And if it does not so happen that a man with the years sinks into the most trivial kind of despair, from this it does not by any means follow that despair might belong only to youth. If a man really develops with the years, if he ripens into essential consciousness of the self, he may perhaps despair in a higher form. And if he does not essentially develop with the years, neither does he sink into sheer triviality, that is to say, if he remains pretty much a young

man, a youth, although he is mature, a father and gray-haired, retaining therefore something of the good traits of youth; then indeed he will be exposed also to the possibility of despairing as a youth over the earthly or over something earthly.

So a difference there may well be between the despair of an older man and of a youth, but no essential difference, only a fortuitous one. The youth despairs over the future, as a present tense *in futuro*; there is something in the future he is not willing to accept, hence he is not willing to be himself. The older man despairs over the past, as a present *in praeterito*,[15] which refuses to become more and more past—for so desperate he is not that he entirely succeeds in forgetting it. This past is perhaps something even which repentance should have taken in hand. But if repentance were to emerge, one would first have to despair completely, to despair out and out, and then the spirit-life might break through from the very bottom. But desperate as he is, he dare not let the thing come to such a pass. So there he remains standing, time goes on—unless he succeeds, still more desperately, by the help of forgetfulness, in healing it, so that instead of becoming a repenter, he becomes his own healer [or accomplice, as the word would be more commonly understood]. But such despair, whether it be of

the youth or of the man, is essentially the same, it does not reach any metamorphosis in which the consciousness of the eternal in the self breaks through, so that the battle might begin which either potentiates despair to a higher power or leads to faith.

But is there no essential difference between the two expressions hitherto used as identical: to despair over the earthly (the determinant of totality), and to despair over something earthly (the particular)? Indeed there is. When with infinite passion the self by means of imagination despairs over something earthly, this infinite passion transforms this particular, this something, into the earthly *in toto*, that is to say, the determinant of totality inheres in and belongs to the despairer. The earthly and temporal as such are precisely what falls apart into the particular. It is impossible actually to lose or be deprived of all that is earthly, for the determinant of totality is a thought-determinant. So the self first increases infinitely the actual loss, and then it despairs over the earthly *in toto*. But so soon as this distinction (between despairing over the earthly and over something earthly) is essentially affirmed there is also an essential advance made in the consciousness of the self. This formula, "to be in despair over the earthly" is a dialectic first expression for the next form of despair.

(ii). *Despair about the eternal or over oneself.* Despair over the earthly or over something earthly is really despair also about the eternal and over oneself, in so far as it is despair, for this is the formula for all despair.* But the despairer, as he was depicted in the foregoing, did not observe what was happening behind him, so to speak; he thinks he is in despair over something earthly and constantly talks about what he is in despair over, and yet he is in despair about the eternal; for the fact that he ascribes such great value to the earthly, or, to carry the thought further, that he ascribes to something earthly such great value, or that he first transforms something earthly into every-

* Therefore it is linguistically correct to say, "in despair *over* the earthly" (the occasion), and "*about* the eternal," but "*over* oneself," because this is again another expression for the occasion of despair, which in its concept is always *about* the eternal, whereas that *over* which one despairs may be of the most various sorts. One despairs *over* that which fixes one in despair, over one's misfortune, for example, over the earthly, over the loss of one's fortune, but *about* that which, rightly understood, releases one from despair, therefore about the eternal, about one's salvation, about one's own power, etc. In relation to the self one employs both words: to despair *over* and *about* oneself, because the self is doubly dialectic. And herein consists the obscurity, especially in all lower forms of despair, and in almost all despairers, that with such passionate clearness a man sees and knows *over* what he is in despair, but *about* what it is escapes his notice. The condition requisite for healing is always this *about*-face, and from a purely philosophical point of view it might be a subtle question whether it is possible for one to be in despair with full consciousness of what it is about which one despairs.

thing earthly, and then ascribes to the earthly such great value, is precisely to despair about the eternal.

This despair is now well in advance. If the former was the despair of *weakness*, this is *despair over his weakness*, although it still remains as to its nature under the category "despair of weakness," as distinguished from defiance in the next section. So there is only a relative difference. This difference consists in the fact that the foregoing form has the consciousness of weakness as its final consciousness, whereas in this case consciousness does not come to a stop here but potentiates itself to a new consciousness, a consciousness of its weakness. The despairer understands that it is weakness to take the earthly so much to heart, that it is weakness to despair. But then, instead of veering sharply away from despair to faith, humbling himself before God for his weakness, he is more deeply absorbed in despair and despairs over his weakness. Therewith the whole point of view is inverted, he becomes now more clearly conscious of his despair, recognizing that he is in despair about the eternal, he despairs over himself that he could be weak enough to ascribe to the earthly such great importance, which now becomes his despairing expression for the fact that he has lost the eternal and himself.

Here is the scale of ascent. First, in consciousness of himself: for to despair about the eternal is impossible without having a conception about the self, that there is something eternal in it, or that it has had something eternal in it. And if a man is to despair over himself, he must indeed be conscious also of having a self; that, however, is the thing over which he despairs—not over the earthly or over something earthly, but over himself. Moreover there is in this case a greater consciousness of what despair is; for despair is precisely to have lost the eternal and oneself. As a matter of course there is greater consciousness of the fact that one's condition is that of despair. Furthermore, despair in this case is not merely passive suffering but action. For when the earthly is taken away from the self and a man despairs, it is as if despair came from without, though it comes nevertheless always from the self, indirect-directly from the self, as counter-pressure (reaction), differing in this respect from defiance, which comes directly from the self. Finally, there is here again, though in another sense, a further advance. For just because this despair is more intense, salvation is in a certain sense nearer. Such a despair will hardly forget, it is too deep; but despair is held open every instant, and there is thus possibility of salvation.

For all that, this despair is to be referred to the formula: in despair at not willing to be oneself. Just as a father disinherits a son, so the self is not willing to recognize itself after it has been so weak. In its despair it cannot forget this weakness, it hates itself in a way, it will not humble itself in faith under its weakness in order to gain itself again; no, in its despair it will not hear of itself, so to speak, will not know anything about itself. But there can be no question of being helped by forgetfulness, no question of slipping by the aid of forgetfulness under the determinant of selflessness, and so being a man and a Christian like other men and Christians; no, for this the self is too much a self. As it often was the case with the father who disinherited his son that the outward fact was of little avail to him, he did not by this get free of his son, at least his thought did not; as is often the case with the lover's curse upon the hated one (i.e. the loved one) that it does not help much, it almost imprisons him the more—so it is in the case of the despairing self with relation to itself.

This despair is one quality deeper than the foregoing and is a sort which rarely is met with in the world. That blind door behind which there was nothing is in this case a real door, a door carefully locked to be sure, and behind it sits as it were the self and watches itself, em-

ployed in filling up time with not willing to be itself, and yet is self enough to love itself. This is what is called *introversion.*[16] And from now on we shall be dealing with introversion, which is the direct opposite to immediacy and has a great contempt for it, in the sphere of thought more especially.

But does there then in the realm of reality exist no such self? Has he fled outside of reality to the desert, to the cloister, to the mad-house? Is he not a real man, clothed like others, or like others clad in the customary outer-garments? Yes, certainly there is! Why not? But with respect to this thing of the self he initiates no one, not a soul, he feels no urge to do this, or he has learnt to suppress it. Hear how he talks about it.[17] "After all it's only the purely immediate men—who so far as spirit is concerned are about at the same point as the child in the first period of earliest infancy when with a thoroughly endearing nonchalance it lets everything pass out—it's the purely immediate men who can't retain anything. It is this sort of immediacy which often with great pretentiousness proclaims itself 'truth,' that one is 'a true man and just like people generally are'—which is just as true as it is untrue that a grown man as soon as he feels a corporal need at once yields to it. Every self which is even a little bit reflective has surely a notion of what it is to

repress the self." And our despairer is introverted enough to be able to keep every intruder (that is, every man) at a distance from the topic of the self, whereas outwardly he is completely "a real man." He is a university man, husband and father, an uncommonly competent civil functionary even, a respectable father, very gentle to his wife and carefulness itself with respect to his children. And a Christian? Well, yes, he is that too after a sort; however, he preferably avoids talking on the subject, although he willingly observes and with a melancholy joy that his wife for her edification engages in devotions. He very seldom goes to church, because it seems to him that most parsons really don't know what they are talking about. He makes an exception in the case of one particular priest of whom he concedes that he knows what he is talking about, but he doesn't want to hear him for another reason, because he has a fear that this might lead him too far. On the other hand, he often feels a need of solitude, which for him is a vital necessity—sometimes like breathing, at other times like sleeping. The fact that he feels this vital necessity more than other men is also a sign that he has a deeper nature. Generally the need of solitude is a sign that there is spirit in a man after all, and it is a measure for what spirit there is. The purely twaddling inhuman and too-human men are

to such a degree without feeling for the need of solitude that like a certain species of social birds (the so-called love birds) they promptly die if for an instant they have to be alone. As the little child must be put to sleep by a lullaby, so these men need the tranquilizing hum of society before they are able to eat, drink, sleep, pray, fall in love, etc. But in ancient times as well as in the Middle Ages people were aware of the need of solitude and had respect for what it signifies. In the constant sociability of our age people shudder at solitude to such a degree that they know no other use to put it to but (oh, admirable epigram!) as a punishment for criminals. But after all it is a fact that in our age it is a crime to have spirit, so it is natural that such people, the lovers of solitude, are included in the same class with criminals.

The introverted despairer thus lives on *horis succesivis*, through hours which, though they are not lived for eternity, have nevertheless something to do with the eternal, being employed about the relationship of one's self to itself—but he really gets no further than this. So when this is done, when the need for solitude is satisfied, he goes outside as it were—even when he goes in or converses with wife and children. That which as a husband makes him so gentle and as a father so careful is, apart from his good-nature and his sense of duty, the admission he

has made to himself in his most inward reserve concerning his weakness.

If it were possible for anyone to be privy to his introversion and were to say to him, "This is in fact pride, thou art proud of thyself," he would hardly be likely to admit it to another. When he was alone with himself he would likely admit that there was something in it; but the passionateness with which his self had pictured his weakness would quickly make him believe again that it could not possibly be pride, for it was in fact precisely over his weakness he was in despair—just as if it were not pride which attached such prodigious weight to weakness, just as if it were not because he wanted to be proud of himself that he could not endure this consciousness of weakness.—If one were to say to him, "This is a strange complication, a strange sort of knot; for the whole misfortune consists in the way thought is twined; otherwise the direction is quite normal, it is just this path you must travel through the despair of the self to faith. It is true enough about the weakness, but it is not over this you must despair; the self must be broken in order to become a self, so cease to despair over it." If one were to talk to him thus, he would perhaps understand it in a dispassionate moment, but soon passion would again see falsely, and so again he takes the wrong turn into despair.

As I have said, such despair is rather rare. If it does not stay at that point, merely marking time, and if on the other hand there does not occur a radical change in the despairer so that he gets on the right path to faith, then such despair will either potentiate itself to a higher form and continue to be introversion, or it breaks through to the outside and demolishes the outward disguise under which the despairing man has been living in his incognito. In the latter case such a despairer will then plunge into life, perhaps into the distractions of great undertakings, he will become a restless spirit which leaves only too clear a trace of its actual presence, a restless spirit which wants to forget, and inasmuch as the noise within is so loud stronger means are needed, though of a different sort, than those which Richard III. employs in order not to hear his mother's curses.[18] Or he will seek forgetfulness in sensuality, perhaps in debauchery, in desperation he wants to return to immediacy, but constantly with consciousness of the self, which he does not want to have. In the first case, when despair is potentiated it becomes defiance, and it now becomes manifest how much truth there was in this notion of weakness, it becomes manifest how dialectically correct it is to say that the first expression of defiance is precisely despair over one's weakness.

However, let us in conclusion take another little look at the introvert who in his introversion marks time on the spot. If this introversion is absolutely maintained, *omnibus numeris absoluta*, then suicide will be the danger nearest to him. The common run of men have of course no presentiment of what such an introvert is capable of bearing; if they were to come to know it, they would be astonished. If on the other hand he talks to someone, if to one single man he opens his heart, he is in all probability strained to so high a tension, or so much let down, that suicide does not result from introversion. Such an introvert with one person privy to his thought is a whole tone milder than the absolute case. He probably will shun suicide. It may happen, however, that he falls into despair just for the fact that he has opened his heart to another; it may be that he thinks it would have been infinitely preferable to maintain silence rather than have anyone privy to his secret. There are examples of introverts who are brought to despair precisely because they have acquired a confidant. So after all suicide may be the consequence. Poetically the catastrophe (assuming *poetice* that the protagonist was e.g. a king or emperor) might be fashioned in such a way that the hero had the confidant put to death. One could imagine such a demoniacal tyrant who felt the need of talking

to a fellow-man about his torment, and in this way consumed successively a whole lot of men; for to be his confidant was certain death.—It would be the task for a poet to represent this agonizing self-contradiction in a demoniac man who is not able to get along without a confidant, and not able to have a confidant, and then resolving it in such a way as this.[19]

(2). The despair of willing desparingly to be oneself—defiance.

As it was shown that one might call the despair dealt with in section 1 the despair of weakness, so one might call the despair now to be considered the despair of manliness. In connection with the kind just described it may be called: despair viewed under the determinant of spirit. But manliness belongs more precisely under the determinant of spirit, and womanliness is a lower synthesis.

The despair described in section 1 (ii) was despair over one's weakness, the despairer does not want to be himself. But if one goes one single dialectical step further, if despair thus becomes conscious of the reason why it does not want to be itself, then the case is altered, then defiance is present, for then it is precisely because of this a man is despairingly determined to be himself.

First comes despair over the earthly or something earthly, then despair over oneself about the eternal. Then comes defiance, which really is despair by the aid of the eternal, the despairing abuse of the eternal in the self to the point of being despairingly determined to be oneself. But just because it is despair by the aid of the eternal it lies in a sense very close to the true, and just because it lies very close to the true it is infinitely remote. The despair which is the passage-way to faith is also by the aid of the eternal: by the aid of the eternal the self has courage to lose itself in order to gain itself. Here on the contrary it is not willing to begin by losing itself but wills to be itself.

In this form of despair there is now a mounting consciousness of the self, and hence greater consciousness of what despair is and of the fact that one's condition is that of despair. Here despair is conscious of itself as a deed, it does not come from without as a suffering under the pressure of circumstances, it comes directly from the self. And so after all defiance is a new qualification added to despair over one's weakness.

In order to will in despair to be oneself there must be consciousness of the infinite self. This infinite self, however, is really only the abstractest form, the abstractest possibility of the self, and it is this self the man despairingly wills

to be, detaching the self from every relation to the Power which posited it, or detaching it from the conception that there is such a Power in existence. By the aid of this infinite form the self despairingly wills to dispose of itself or to create itself, to make itself the self it wills to be, distinguishing in the concrete self what it will and what it will not accept. The man's concrete self, or his concretion, has in fact necessity and limitations, it is this perfectly definite thing, with these faculties, dispositions, etc. But by the aid of the infinite form, the negative self, he wills first to undertake to refashion the whole thing, in order to get out of it in this way a self such as he wants to have, produced by the aid of the infinite form of the negative self—and it is thus he wills to be himself. That is to say, he is not willing to begin with the beginning but "in the beginning."[20] He is not willing to attire himself in himself, nor to see his task in the self given him; by the aid of being the infinite form he wills to construct it himself.

If one would have a common name for this despair, one might call it Stoicism—yet without thinking only of this philosophic sect. And to illuminate this sort of despair more sharply one would do well to distinguish between the active and the passive self, showing how the self is related to itself when it is active, and how it is related to itself in suffering when it is pas-

sive, and showing that the formula constantly is: in despair to will to be oneself.

If the despairing *self* is *active*, it really is related to itself only as experimenting with whatsoever it be that it undertakes, however great it may be, however astonishing, however persistently carried out. It acknowledges no power over it, hence in the last resort it lacks seriousness and is able only to conjure up a show of seriousness when the self bestows upon its experiments its utmost attention. Like the fire which Prometheus stole from the gods, so does this mean to steal from God the thought which is seriousness, that God is regarding one, instead of which the despairing self is content with regarding itself, and by that it is supposed to bestow upon its undertakings infinite interest and importance, whereas it is precisely this which makes them mere experiments. For though this self were to go so far in despair that it becomes an experimental god, no derived self can by regarding itself give itself more than it is: it nevertheless remains from first to last the self, by self-duplication it becomes neither more nor less than the self. Hence the self in its despairing effort to will to be itself labors itself into the direct opposite, it becomes really no self. In the whole dialectic within which it acts there is nothing firm, what the self is does not for an instant stand firm, that is, eternally firm.

The negative form of the self exercises quite as much the power of loosing as of binding, every instant it can quite arbitrarily begin all over again, and however far a thought may be pursued, the whole action is within a hypothesis. It is so far from being true that the self succeeds more and more in becoming itself, that in fact it merely becomes more and more manifest that it is a hypothetical self. The self is its own lord and master, so it is said, its own lord, and precisely this is despair, but so also is what it regards as its pleasure and enjoyment. However, by closer inspection one easily ascertains that this ruler is a king without a country, he rules really over nothing; his condition, his dominion, is subjected to the dialectic that every instant revolution is legitimate. For in the last resort this depends arbitrarily upon the self.

So the despairing self is constantly building nothing but castles in the air, it fights only in the air. All these experimented virtues make a brilliant showing; for an instant they are enchanting like an oriental poem: such self-control, such firmness, such ataraxia, etc., border almost on the fabulous. Yes, they do to be sure; and also at the bottom of it all there is nothing. The self wants to enjoy the entire satisfaction of making itself into itself, of developing itself, of being itself; it wants to have the honor of this

poetical, this masterly plan according to which it has understood itself. And yet in the last resort it is a riddle how it understands itself; just at the instant when it seems to be nearest to having the fabric finished it can arbitrarily resolve the whole thing into nothing.[21]

If the despairing self is a *passive* sufferer, we have still the same formula: in despair at willing to be oneself. Perhaps such an experimenting self which in despair wills to be itself, at the moment when it is making a preliminary exploration of its concrete self, stumbles upon one or another hardship of the sort that the Christian would call a cross, a fundamental defect, it matters not what. The negative self, the infinite form of the self, will perhaps cast this clean away, pretend that it does not exist, want to know nothing about it. But this does not succeed, its virtuosity in experimenting does not extend so far, nor does its virtuosity in abstraction; like Prometheus the infinite, negative self feels that it is nailed to this servitude. So then it is a passively suffering self. How then does the despair which despairingly wills to be itself display itself in this case?

Note that in the foregoing the form of despair was represented which is in despair over the earthly or over something earthly, so understood that at bottom this is and also shows itself to be despair about the eternal, i.e. despair

which wills not to let itself be comforted by the eternal, which rates the earthly so high that the eternal can be of no comfort. But this too is a form of despair: not to be willing to hope that an earthly distress, a temporal cross, might be removed. This is what the despair which wills desperately to be itself is not willing to hope. It has convinced itself that this thorn in the flesh[22] gnaws so profoundly that he cannot abstract it—no matter whether this is actually so or his passion makes it true for him,* and so he is willing to accept it as it were eternally. So he is offended by it,[23] or rather from it he takes occasion to be offended at the whole of existence, in spite of it he would be himself, not despitefully be himself without it (for that is to abstract from it, and that he cannot do, or that

* From this standpoint, it is well to note here, one will see also that much which is embellished by the name of resignation is a kind of despair, that of willing despairingly to be one's abstract self, of willing despairingly to be satisfied with the eternal and thereby be able to defy or ignore suffering in the earthly and temporal sphere. The dialectic of resignation is commonly this to will to be one's eternal self, and then with respect to something positive wherein the self suffers, not to will to be oneself, contenting oneself with the thought that after all this will disappear in eternity, thinking itself therefore justified in not accepting it in time, so that, although suffering under it, the self will not make to it the concession that it properly belongs to the self, that is, it will not humble itself under it in faith. Resignation regarded as despair is essentially different from the form, "in despair at not willing to be oneself," for it wills desperately to be itself—with exception, however, of one particular, with respect to which it wills despairingly not to be itself.

would be a movement in the direction of resignation); no, in spite of or in defiance of the whole of existence he wills to be himself with it, to take it along, almost defying his torment. For to hope in the possibility of help, not to speak of help by virtue of the absurd, that for God all things are possible—no, that he will not do. And as for seeking help from any other —no, that he will not do for all the world; rather than seek help he would prefer to be himself—with all the tortures of hell, if so it must be.

And of a truth it is not quite so true after all when people say that "it is a matter of course that a sufferer would be so glad to be helped, if only somebody would help him"—this is far from being the case, even though the opposite case is not always so desperate as this. The situation is this. A sufferer has one or more ways in which he would be glad to be helped. If he is helped thus, he is willing to be helped. But when in a deeper sense it becomes seriousness with this thing of needing help, especially from a higher or from the highest source—this humiliation of having to accept help unconditionally and in any way, the humiliation of becoming nothing in the hand of the Helper for whom all things are possible, or merely the necessity of deferring to another man, of having to give up being oneself so long as one is

seeking help—ah, there are doubtless many sufferings, even protracted and agonizing sufferings, at which the self does not wince to this extent, and which therefore at bottom it prefers to retain and to be itself.

But the more consciousness there is in such a sufferer who in despair is determined to be himself, all the more does despair too potentiate itself and become demoniac. The genesis of this is commonly as follows. A self which in despair is determined to be itself winces at one pain or another which simply cannot be taken away or separated from its concrete self. Precisely upon this torment the man directs his whole passion, which at last becomes a demoniac rage. Even if at this point God in heaven and all his angels were to offer to help him out of it—no, now he doesn't want it, now it is too late, he once would have given everything to be rid of this torment but was made to wait, now that's all past, now he would rather rage against everything, he, the one man in the whole of existence who is the most unjustly treated, to whom it is especially important to have his torment at hand, important that no one should take it from him—for thus he can convince himself that he is in the right. This at last becomes so firmly fixed in his head that for a very peculiar reason he is afraid of eternity—for the reason, namely, that it might rid him of

his (demoniacally understood) infinite advantage over other men, his (demoniacally understood) justification for being what he is. It is himself he wills to be; he began with the infinite abstraction of the self, and now at last he has become so concrete that it would be an impossibility to be eternal in that sense, and yet he wills in despair to be himself. Ah, demoniac madness! He rages most of all at the thought that eternity might get it into its head to take his misery from him!

This sort of despair is seldom seen in the world, such figures generally are met with only in the works of poets, that is to say, of real poets, who always lend their characters this "demoniac" ideality (taking this word in the purely Greek sense). Nevertheless such a despairer is to be met with also in real life. What then is the corresponding outward mark? Well, there is no "corresponding" mark, for in fact a corresponding outward expression corresponding to close reserve is a contradiction in terms; for if it is corresponding, it is then of course revealing. But outwardness is the entirely indifferent factor in this case where introversion, or what one might call inwardness with a jammed lock, is so much the predominant factor. The lowest forms of despair, where there really was no inwardness, or at all events none worth talking about, the lowest forms of despair one might

represent by describing or by saying something about the outward traits of the despairer. But the more despair becomes spiritual, and the more inwardness becomes a peculiar world for itself in introversion, all the more is the self alert with demoniac shrewdness to keep despair shut up in close reserve, and all the more intent therefore to set the outward appearance at the level of indifference, to make it as unrevealing and indifferent as possible. As according to the report of superstition the troll disappears through a crack which no one can perceive, so it is for the despairer all the more important to dwell in an exterior semblance behind which it ordinarily would never occur to anyone to look for it. This hiddenness is precisely something spiritual and is one of the safety-devices for assuring oneself of having as it were behind reality an enclosure, a world for itself locking all else out, a world where the despairing self is employed as tirelessly as Tantalus in willing to be itself.

We began in section 1 (ii) with the lowest form of despair, which in despair does not will to be itself. The demoniac despair is the most potentiated form of the despair which despairingly wills to be itself. This despair does not will to be itself with Stoic doting upon itself, nor with self-deification, willing in this way,

doubtless mendaciously, yet in a certain sense in terms of its perfection; no, with hatred for existence it wills to be itself, to be itself in terms of its misery; it does not even in defiance or defiantly will to be itself, but to be itself in spite; it does not even will in defiance to tear itself free from the Power which posited it, it wills to obtrude upon this Power in spite, to hold on to it out of malice. And that is natural, a malignant objection must above all take care to hold on to that against which it is an objection. Revolting against the whole of existence, it thinks it has hold of a proof against it, against its goodness. This proof the despairer thinks he himself is, and that is what he wills to be, therefore he wills to be himself, himself with his torment, in order with this torment to protest against the whole of existence. Whereas the weak despairer will not hear about what comfort eternity has for him, so neither will such a despairer hear about it, but for a different reason, namely, because this comfort would be the destruction of him as an objection against the whole of existence. It is (to describe it figuratively) as if an author were to make a slip of the pen, and that this clerical error became conscious of being such—perhaps it was no error[24] but in a far higher sense was an essential constituent in the whole exposition—it is then as if this clerical error would revolt

against the author, out of hatred for him were to forbid him to correct it, and were to say, "No, I will not be erased, I will stand as a witness against thee, that thou art a very poor writer."

PART SECOND

DESPAIR IS SIN

I. DESPAIR IS SIN

SIN is this: *before God, or with the conception of God, to be in despair at not willing to be oneself, or in despair at willing to be oneself.* Thus sin is potentiated weakness or potentiated defiance: sin is the potentiation of despair. The point upon which the emphasis rests is *before God*, or the fact that the conception of God is involved; the factor which dialectically, ethically, religiously, makes "qualified" despair (to use a juridical term) synonymous with sin is the conception of God.

Although in this Second Part, and especially in this section, there is no place or occasion for psychological description, there here may be introduced, as the most dialectical borderline between despair and sin, what one might call a poet-existence in the direction of the religious,[25] an existence which has something in common with the despair of resignation, only that the conception of God is involved. Such an existence (as is to be seen from the conjunction and position of the categories) will be the most eminent poet-existence. From a Christian standpoint such an existence (in spite of all aesthetic) is sin, it is the sin of poetizing instead of being, of standing in relation to the Good

and the True through imagination instead of being that, or rather existentially striving to be it. The poet-existence here in question is distinguished from despair by the fact that it includes the conception of God or is before God; but it is prodigiously dialectical, and is in an impenetrable dialectical confusion as to how far it is conscious of being sin. Such a poet may have a very deep religious need, and the conception of God is included in his despair. He loves God above everything, God is for him the only comfort in his secret torment, and yet he loves the torment, he will not let it go. He would so gladly be himself before God, but not with respect to this fixed point where the self suffers, there despairingly he will not be himself; he hopes that eternity will remove it, and here in the temporal, however much he suffers under it, he cannot will to accept it, cannot humble himself under it in faith. And yet he continues to hold to God, and this is his only happiness, for him it would be the greatest horror to have to do without God, "it would be enough to drive one to despair"; and yet he permits himself commonly, but perhaps unconsciously, to poetize God, making him a little bit other than He is, a little bit more like a loving father who all too much indulges the child's "only wish." He who became unhappy in love, and therefore became a poet, blissfully

extolls the happiness of love—so he became a poet of religiousness, he understands obscurely that it is required of him to let this torment go, that is, to humble himself under it in faith and to accept it as belonging to the self—for he would hold it aloof from him, and thereby precisely he holds it fast, although doubtless he thinks (and this, like every other word of despair, is correct in the opposite sense and therefore must be understood inversely) that this must mean separating himself from it as far as possible, letting it go as far as it is possible for a man to do so. But to accept it in faith, that he cannot do, or rather in the last resort he will not, or here is where the self ends in obscurity.[26] But like that poet's description of love, so this poet's description of the religious possesses an enchantment, a lyrical flight, such as no married man's description has, nor that of his Reverence. What he says is not untrue, by no means, his representation reflects his happier, his better *ego*. With respect to the religious he is an unhappy lover, that is, he is not in a strict sense a believer, he has only the first prerequisite of faith, and with that an ardent longing for the religious. His collision is essentially this: is he the elect, is the thorn in the flesh the expression for the fact that he is to be employed as the extraordinary, is it before God quite as it should be with respect to the extraordinary

figure he has become? or is the thorn in the flesh the experience he must humble himself under in order to attain the universal human?[27] But enough of this. I can say with the emphasis of truth, "To whom am I talking?" Who will bother about such psychological investigations carried to the *nth* power? The Nüremburg Picture Books painted by priests are easily understood, they all resemble one another—deceptively—and spiritually understood they are nothing.

CHAPTER 1

GRADATIONS IN THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE SELF (THE QUALIFICATION "BEFORE GOD")

In the foregoing there is steadily pointed out a gradation in the consciousness of the self: first came unconsciousness of being an eternal self (III.B a), then a knowledge of having a self in which there is after all something eternal (III.B b), and under this (1 i and ii, 2) there were again pointed out gradations. This whole situation must now be turned about and viewed in a new way. The point is this. The gradations in the consciousness of the self with which we have hitherto been employed are within the definition of the human self, or the self whose measure is man. But this self acquires a new quality or qualification in the fact that it is the

self directly in the sight of God. This self is no longer the merely human self but is what I would call, hoping not to be misunderstood, the theological self, the self directly in the sight of God. And what an infinite reality this self acquires by being before God! A herdsman who (if this were possible), is a self only in the sight of cows is a very low self, and so also is a ruler who is a self in the sight of slaves—for in both cases the scale or measure is lacking. The child who hitherto has had only the parents to measure himself by, becomes a self when he is a man by getting the state as a measure. But what an infinite accent falls upon the self by getting God as a measure! The measure for the self always is that in the face of which it is a self; but this does not define what "measure" is. As one can add up only magnitudes of the same order, so each thing is qualitatively that by which it is measured; and that which is qualitatively its measure (*Maalestok*) is ethically its goal (*Maal*); and the measure and goal are qualitatively that which something is—with exception of the relation which obtains in the world of freedom, where a man by not being qualitatively that which is his goal and his measure must himself have deserved this disqualification, so that the goal and the measure remain the same ..condemningly, making man-

ifest what it is he is not: that, namely which is his goal and his measure.

It was a very just thought to which the older dogmatic[28] frequently recurred, whereas a later dogmatic[29] so often censored it for lack of understanding and a proper sense of its meaning—it was a very just thought, although sometimes a wrong application was made of it: the thought that what makes sin so frightful is that it is before God. From this the theologians proved the eternity of hell-punishment. Subsequently they became shrewder and said, "Sin is sin; sin is not greater because it is against God or before God." Strange! For even the jurists talk about "qualified" crimes and extenuating circumstances, even the jurists make distinction with regard to a crime, inquiring, for example, whether it is committed against a public functionary or a private person, they prescribe a different punishment for the murder of a father and an ordinary murder.

No, the earlier dogmatic was right in asserting that the fact that the sin was before God infinitely potentiated it. Their fault lay in regarding God as something external, and in assuming that it was only now and then men sinned against God. But God is not something external in the sense that a policeman is. What we need to emphasize is that the self has the

conception of God, and that then it does not will as He wills, and so is disobedient. Nor is it only now and then one sins before God; for every sin is before God, or rather it is this which properly makes human guilt to be sin.[30]

Despair is potentiated in proportion to consciousness of self; but the self is potentiated in the ratio of the measure proposed for the self, and infinitely potentiated when God is the measure. The more conception of God, the more self; the more self, the more conception of God. Only when the self as this definite individual is conscious of existing before God, only then is it the infinite self; and then this self sins before God. The selfishness of paganism, therefore, in spite of all that can be said about it, is not nearly so "qualified" as that of Christendom, in so far as here also there is selfishness; for the pagan did not possess his self directly in the face of God. The pagan and the natural man have as their measure the merely human self. One may be right therefore from a higher standpoint in regarding paganism as lying in sin, but properly the sin of paganism was the despairing unawareness of God, unawareness of existing before God; this means to be "without God in the world."[31] On the other hand, it is for this reason true that the pagan did not sin in the strictest sense, for he did not sin before God. Moreover, it is also in a

sense quite certain that many a time a pagan is enabled in a way to slip through the world irreproachably precisely because his light-minded Pelagian interpretation saved him; but then his sin is a different one, namely, this light-minded interpretation. On the other hand and in a different aspect it is quite certain that just by being brought up strictly in Christianity a man has in a certain sense been plunged into sin, because the whole Christian view was too serious for him, especially in an earlier period of his life;[32] but then in another sense this is again of some help to him, this deeper apprehension of what sin is.

Sin is: before God in despair not to will to be oneself, or before God in despair to will to be oneself. But is not this definition, even though in other aspects it may be conceded to have advantages (and among them this which is the weightiest of all, that it is the only Scriptural definition, for the Scripture always defines sin as disobedience), is it not after all too spiritual? To this one must first of all make answer that a definition of sin can never be too spiritual (unless it becomes so spiritual that it does away with sin); for sin is precisely a determinant of spirit. And in the next place, why should it then be too spiritual? Because it does not talk about murder, theft, unchastity, etc.? But does it not talk of them? Is it not also self-assertion

against God when one is disobedient and defies His commandment? But on the other hand, when in talking about sin one talks only of such sins, it is so easily forgotten that in a way it may be all right, humanly speaking, with respect to all such things up to a certain point, and yet the whole life may be sin, the well-known kind of sin: glittering vices, wilfulness, which either spiritlessly or impudently continues to be or wills to be unaware in what an infinitely deeper sense a human self is morally under obligation to God with respect to every most secret wish and thought, with respect to quickness in comprehending and readiness to follow every hint of God as to what His will is for this self. The sins of the flesh are the self-assertion of the lower self; but how often one devil is cast out by the devil's help, and the last state becomes worse than the first. For so it is with men in this world: first a man sins from frailty and weakness; and then—yes, then perhaps he learns to flee to God and to be helped by faith which saves from all sin; but of this we are not talking here—then he despairs over his weakness and becomes, either a Pharisee who in despair manages to attain a certain legal righteousness, or he despairs and plunges again into sin.

The definition therefore certainly embraces every conceivable and actual form of sin; it certainly throws into relief the decisive fact that sin is despair (for sin is not the wildness of flesh and blood, but it is the spirit's consent thereto), and it is...before God. As a definition it is algebraic. In this little work it would be out of place, and an effort moreover which perhaps would not succeed, were I to begin by describing the particular sins. The principal thing here is that the definition like a net must embrace all forms. And that it does, as can be seen when one tests it by setting up the opposite, namely, the definition of faith, by which I steer my course in the whole of this work, as by a sure mariners' mark. Faith is: that the self in being itself and in willing to be itself is grounded transparently in God.

But too often it has been overlooked that the opposite of sin is not *virtue*, not by any manner of means. This is in part a pagan view which is content with a merely human measure and properly does not know what *sin* is, that all sin is before God. No, *the opposite of sin is faith*, as is affirmed in Rom.14:23, "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." And for the whole of Christianity it is one of the most decisive definitions that the opposite of sin is not virtue but faith.

APPENDIX

THAT THE DEFINITION OF SIN CONTAINS THE POSSIBILITY OF THE OFFENSE—A GENERAL OBSERVATION ABOUT OFFENSE

The opposition sin/faith is the Christian one, which in a Christian way transforms the definition of all ethical concepts, giving them one distillation the more. At the bottom of this opposition lies the decisive Christian concept, "before God," a determinant which in turn stands in relation to the decisive criterion of Christianity: the absurd, the paradox, the possibility of offense.[33] And that this should be indicated in every definition of Christianity is of the utmost importance, for the offense is Christianity's defense against all speculation. In this instance where is the possibility of the offense? It lies in the fact that a man, as a particular individual, should have such a reality as is implied by existing directly in the sight of God; and then again, and as a consequence of this, that a man's sin should concern God. This notion of the particular man...before God speculative philosophy never gets into its head, it can only universalize the particular man fantastically. It was just for this reason also that

an incredulous Christianity made out that sin is sin, no matter whether it is directly in the sight of God or not. That is to say, they wanted to do away with the determinant "before God," and to this end they discovered a higher wisdom—which, however, strangely enough, was neither more nor less than what the higher wisdom no doubt generally is...the old paganism.

There is so much said now about people being offended at Christianity because it is so dark and gloomy, offended at it because it is so severe, etc. It is now high time to explain that the real reason why man is offended at Christianity is because it is too high, because its goal is not man's goal, because it would make of a man something so extraordinary that he is unable to get it into his head. A perfectly simple psychological investigation of what offense is will explain this, and at the same time it will show how infinitely silly their behavior has been who defended Christianity by taking away the offense, how stupidly or impudently they have ignored Christ's own instruction, who often and with such deep concern warns against the offense, that is, intimates that the possibility of the offense is present, and must be ever-present; for if it is not present, if it is not an eternally essential constituent of Christianity, it is nonsense, humanly speaking, for

Christ, instead of taking it away, to be distressed about it and to give warning against it.

If I were to imagine to myself a day-laborer and the mightiest emperor that ever lived, and were to imagine that this mighty Emperor took a notion to send for the poor man, who never had dreamed, "neither had it entered into his heart to believe," that the Emperor knew of his existence, and who therefore would think himself indescribably fortunate if merely he was permitted once to see the Emperor, and would recount it to children and children's children as the most important event of his life—but suppose the Emperor sent for him and informed him that he wished to have him for his son-in-law...what then? Then the laborer, humanly, would become somewhat or very much puzzled, shame-faced, and embarrassed, and it would seem to him, quite humanly (and this is the human element in it), something exceedingly strange, something quite mad, the last thing in the world about which he would say a word to anybody else, since he himself in his own mind was not far from explaining it by supposing (as his neighbors would be busily doing as soon as possible) that the Emperor wanted to make a fool of him, so that the poor man would be the laughing-stock of the whole town, his picture in the papers, the story of his espousal to the Em-

peror's daughter the theme of ballad-mongers. This thing, however, of becoming the Emperor's son-in-law might readily be subjected to the tests of reality, so that the laborer would be able to ascertain how far the Emperor was serious in this matter, or whether he merely wanted to make fun of the poor fellow, render him unhappy for the rest of his life, and help him to find his way to the mad-house; for the *quid nimis* is in evidence, which with such infinite ease can turn into its opposite. A small expression of favor the laborer would be able to get through his head; it would be understood in the market-town[34] by "the highly respected cultured public," by all ballad-mongers, in short, by the 5 times 100,000 persons who dwelt in that market-town, which with respect to its population was even a very big city, but with respect to possessing understanding of and sense for the extraordinary was a very small market-town—but this thing of becoming the Emperor's son-in-law was far too much. And suppose now that this was not an external reality but an inward thing, so that factual proofs could not help the laborer to certitude, but faith itself was the facticity, and so it was all left to faith whether he possessed humble courage enough to dare to believe it (for impudent courage cannot help one to *believe*)—how many laboring men were there

likely to be who possessed this courage? But he who had not this courage would be offended; the extraordinary would seem to him almost like mockery of him. He would then perhaps honestly and plainly admit, "Such a thing is too high for me, I cannot get it into my head; it seems to me, if I may blurt it straight out, foolishness."

And now for Christianity! Christianity teaches that this particular individual, and so every individual, whatever in other respects this individual may be, man, woman, serving-maid, minister of state, merchant, barber, student, etc.—this individual exists *before God*—this individual who perhaps would be vain for having once in his life talked with the King, this man who is not a little proud of living on intimate terms with that person or the other, this man exists before God, can talk with God any moment he will, sure to be heard by Him, in short, this man is invited to live on the most intimate terms with God! Furthermore, for this man's sake God came to the world, let himself be born, suffers and dies; and this suffering God almost begs and entreats this man to accept the help which is offered him! Verily, if there is anything that would make a man lose his understanding, it is surely this! Whosoever has not the humble courage to dare to believe it, must be offended at it. But why is he offend-

ed? Because it is too high for him, because he cannot get it into his head, because in the face of it he cannot acquire frank-heartedness, and therefore must have it done away with, brought to naught and nonsense, for it is as though it would stifle him.

For what is offense? Offense is unhappy admiration. It is therefore akin to envy, but it is an envy which is turned against oneself, or, more exactly, envy which is worst of all against oneself. The narrow-mindedness of the natural man cannot welcome for itself the extraordinary which God has intended for him; so he is offended.

The degree of the offense depends upon what passion a man has for admiration. The more prosaic men, devoid of imagination and passion, and who therefore are not apt to admire, they too may be offended, but they confine themselves to saying, "Such a thing I can't get through my head, I let it alone." These are the sceptics. But the more passion and imagination a man has, the nearer he also is in a certain sense (that is, in the possibility) to being able to become a believer—*nota bene*! by adoringly humbling himself under the extraordinary—and with that, all the more passionate is the offense, which at last cannot be contented with less than the expression: annihilated and trodden in the dust.

If one would learn to understand offense, let him study human envy, a subject which I offer as an extra course, pluming myself upon having studied it profoundly. Envy is concealed admiration. An admirer who feels that he cannot be happy by surrendering himself elects to become envious of that which he admires. So he speaks another language, and in that language of his the thing which he really admires is called a stupid, insipid and queer sort of thing. Admiration is happy self-surrender; envy is unhappy self-assertion.

So also it is with offense: that which in the relation between man and man is known as admiration /envy, in the relation between man and God is adoration /offense. The *summa summarum* of all human wisdom is this "golden,"[35] or perhaps more properly the gilded, *ne quid nimis*, too much or too little spoils the broth. This is given and taken between man and man as wisdom and is honored by admiration, its quotation never fluctuates, the whole of humanity guarantees its value. So if once in a while there lives a genius who goes a little bit beyond it, he is declared mad...by the wise. But Christianity takes a prodigious giant-stride beyond this *ne quid nimis*, a stride into the absurd—there Christianity begins...and the offense.

One sees now how extraordinarily (that there might be something extraordinary left)—how extraordinarily stupid it is to defend Christianity, how little knowledge of men this betrays, and how truly, even though it be unconsciously, it is working in collusion with the enemy, by making of Christianity a miserable something or another which in the end has to be rescued by a defense. Therefore it is certain and true that he who first invented the notion of defending Christianity in Christendom is *de facto* Judas No. 2; he also betrays with a kiss, only his treachery is that of stupidity. To defend anything is always to discredit it. Let a man have a storehouse full of gold, let him be willing to dispense every ducat to the poor—but let him besides that be stupid enough to begin this benevolent undertaking with a defense in which he advances three reasons to prove that it is justifiable—and people will be almost inclined to doubt whether he is doing any good. But now for Christianity! Yea, he who defends it has never believed in it. If he believes, then the enthusiasm of faith is...not defense, no, it is attack and victory. The believer is a victor.

Thus it stands with Christianity and the offense. The possibility of the offense is quite rightly included in the Christian definition of sin—in this phrase, "before God." A pagan,

the natural man, is very willing to admit that sin exists, but this "before God," which really is what makes sin to be sin, is for him too much, it seems to him (though in a different sense from that pointed out here) to make too much of what it is to be a man; a little less, and then he is willing to agree to it—"but too much is too much."

CHAPTER 2

THE SOCRATIC DEFINITION OF SIN

Sin is ignorance. This is the well-known Socratic definition of sin, which, like everything Socratic, is an opinion always worthy of attention. However, with respect to this Socratic position, as with respect to many other Socratic positions, how many men have felt a need of going further? What an innumerable number have felt the need of going further than the Socratic ignorance—presumably because they felt that it was impossible for them to stay there; for in every generation how many men are there that are capable, even for only a month, of enduring and existentially expressing ignorance about everything?

Therefore I do not by any means intend to dispose of the Socratic definition on the ground that one cannot stop with it; but, having the Christian definition *in mente*, I would make use

of it to bring the other out sharply (just because the Socratic definition is so genuinely Greek), so that here as always the hollowness of every other definition which is not in the strictest sense Christian (that is, of every partial definition) may become manifest.

The difficulty with the Socratic definition is that it leaves undetermined how ignorance itself is to be more precisely understood, the question of its origin, etc. That is to say, even if sin be ignorance (or what Christianity would perhaps prefer to call stupidity), which in one sense cannot be denied, we have to ask, is this an original ignorance, is it always the case that one has not known and hitherto could not know anything about the truth, or is it a superinduced, a subsequent ignorance? If it is what the last question implies, then sin must properly have its ground in something else, it must have its ground in the activity with which a man has labored to obscure his intelligence. But also when this is assumed, the stiff-necked and tough-lived difficulty returns, prompting the question whether at the instant a man began to obscure his intelligence he was distinctly conscious of what he was doing. If he was not distinctly conscious of this, then his intelligence was already somewhat obscured before he began, and the question merely returns again. If it is assumed on the contrary that when he be-

gan to obscure his intelligence he was distinctly conscious of it, then sin (even though it be unconsciousness, seeing that this was an induced state) would not lie in the intelligence but in the will, and the question which must be raised is about the relation of the intelligence and the will to one another. With such questions as these (and one might continue to augment them for many a day) the Socratic definition does not deal. Socrates was certainly an ethical teacher (the Classical age claims him absolutely as the discoverer of ethics), he was the first one, as he is and remains the first in his class; but he begins with ignorance. Intellectually, it is toward ignorance he tends, toward the position of knowing nothing. Ethically, he understands by ignorance quite a different thing, and so he begins with that.

But on the other hand, as a matter of course, Socrates is not an essentially religious ethicist, still less a dogmatic one, as the Christian ethicist is. Hence he does not really enter into the whole investigation with which Christianity begins, into the *prius* in which sin presupposes itself, and which is Christianly explained by the doctrine of original sin—a dogma to the border of which only we come in this investigation.

Socrates therefore never really gets to the determinant we know as sin, which is surely a

defect in a definition of sin. Why is this? For if sin is indeed ignorance, then sin properly does not exist, since sin is definitely consciousness. If sin consists in being ignorant of what is right, so that one consequently does what is wrong, sin does not exist. If this is sin, then it must be assumed, as Socrates also assumed, that the case does not occur of a man knowing what is right and doing what is wrong, or knowing that a thing is wrong and doing the wrong. So then, if the Socratic definition is correct, sin does not exist. But, lo, precisely this is, Christianly understood, just as it should be, in a deeper sense it is quite correct, in the interest of Christianity it is *quod erat demonstrandum*. Precisely the concept by which Christianity distinguishes itself qualitatively and most decisively from paganism is the concept of sin, the doctrine of sin; and therefore Christianity also assumes quite consistently that neither paganism nor the natural man knows what sin is; yea, it assumes that there must be a revelation from God to make manifest what sin is. For it is not true, as a superficial view assumes, that the doctrine of the atonement is the qualitative difference between paganism and Christianity. No, the beginning must be made far deeper, with sin, with the doctrine of sin, as Christianity also does. What a dangerous objection therefore against Christianity if paganism had a defini-

tion of sin which Christianity must admit is correct!

What determinant is it then that Socrates lacks in determining what sin is? It is will, defiant will. The Greek intellectualism was too happy, too naïve, too aesthetic, too ironical, too witty...to be able to get it sinfully into its head that a person knowingly could fail to do the good, or knowingly, with knowledge of what was right, do what was wrong. The Greek spirit proposes an intellectual categorical imperative.

The truth in this definition must by no means be overlooked, and it needs to be enforced in times such as these which have gone astray in so much flatulent and unfruitful knowledge, so that doubtless now, just as in Socrates' age, only much more, it is advisable that people should be starved a little bit. It is enough to provoke both laughter and tears—not only all these protestations about having understood and comprehended the highest thought, but also the virtuosity with which many know how to present it *in abstracto*, and in a certain sense quite correctly—it is enough to provoke both laughter and tears when one sees then that all this knowing and understanding exercises no influence upon the lives of these men, that their lives do not in the remotest way express what they have understood,

but rather the contrary. One involuntarily exclaims at the sight of a disproportion at once so sorrowful and so ludicrous. But how in the world is it possible that they have understood it? And is it true that they have understood? Here the ancient ironist and ethicist makes answer: "My dear man, never believe it, for if they truly had understood, their lives also would have expressed it, they would have done what they understood."

To understand /and to understand are therefore two things? Certainly they are; and he who has understood this (but not, be it noted, in the sense of the first sort of understanding) is initiated into all the secret mysteries of irony. It is with this contradiction irony is properly employed. To perceive the comic in the fact that a person is actually ignorant of something means a very low sort of comic, beneath the dignity of irony. There is properly no profound comic in the fact that people once lived who assumed that the earth stands still—when nobody knew any better. The same thing will presumably befall our age in contrast with an age which knows more of physical law. The contradiction is one between two different ages, there is lacking a deeper point of coincidence; such a contradiction is not essential, and hence neither is it essentially comic. No, but that a man stands up and says the right

thing...and so has understood it, and then when he has to act does the wrong thing... and so shows that he has not understood it—yes, that is comic. It is infinitely comic that a man, moved unto tears, so much moved that not only tears but sweat trickle from him, can sit and read, or hear, representations of self-denial, of the nobility of sacrificing one's life for the truth—and then the next instant—one, two, three, slap-dash, almost with the tears still in his eyes—is in full swing, in the sweat of his brow, with all his might and main, helping falsehood to conquer. It is infinitely comic that an orator, with truth in his voice and in the expression of his features, profoundly touched and profoundly touching, can present the truth in a heart-rending way, can tread all evil and all the powers of hell under his feet, with an aplomb in his attitude, an assurance in his glance, a resoluteness in his step, which is altogether admirable—it is infinitely comic that almost at the same moment, almost "with his dressing-gown still on,"[36] he can run cowardly and timidly out of the way of the least inconvenience. It is infinitely comic that a man can understand the whole truth about how wretched and petty this world is, etc.—that he can understand this, and then cannot recognize again what he understood; for almost in the same moment he himself goes off and takes

part in the same pettiness and wretchedness, takes glory in it and receives glory from it, that is, accepts it. O when one beholds a man who protests that he has entirely understood how Christ went about in the form of a lowly servant, poor, despised, and, as the Scripture says, spat upon—when I see the same man so careful to betake himself thither where in a worldly sense it is good to be, and accommodate himself there in the utmost security, when I see him apprehensive of every puff of wind from right or left, as though his life depended upon it, and so blissful, so utterly blissful, so awfully glad—yes, to make the thing complete, so awfully glad that he is able to thank God for it—glad that he is held in honor by all men—then I have often said to myself and by myself, "Socrates, Socrates, Socrates, can it be possible that this man has understood what he says he has understood?" So I have said, and at the same time I have wished that Socrates might be right. For it seemed to me after all as though Christianity were too severe, nor can I bring it into accord with my experience to treat such a man as a hypocrite. No, Socrates, thee I can understand; thou dost treat him as a wag, as a sort of merry Andrew, thou dost treat him as a butt for laughter, thou hast no objection, it has even thine approval, that I prepare and serve him up as a comic dish—provided I do it well.

Socrates, Socrates, Socrates! Yes, one may well call thy name thrice, it would not be too much to call it ten times, if that would do any good. People think that the world needs a republic, and they think that it needs a new social order, and a new religion—but it never occurs to anybody that what the world now needs, confused as it is by much knowing, is a Socrates. But that is perfectly natural, for if anybody had this notion, not to say if many were to have it, there would be less need of a Socrates. What a delusion most needs is the very thing it least thinks of—naturally, for otherwise it would not be a delusion.

So then, such an ironic-ethical correction might very well be what our age needs, and perhaps the only thing it really needs; for it is evident that this is the thing it least thinks of. It is highly important that, instead of going further than Socrates, we simply return to the Socratic dictum that to understand /and to understand are two things—not returning to it as a result [once for all acquired], for in the end that only helps men into the deepest wretchedness, since it simply abolishes the distinction between understanding /and understanding, but returning to it as the ethical interpretation of every-day life.

The Socratic definition helps itself out as follows. When a person doesn't do the right

thing; why then, neither has he understood it; his understanding is a vain conceit, his assertion that he has understood it is a false indication of the way, his repeated assertion that the devil take him if he has not understood it is a prodigious remoteness along the greatest possible detour. But then indeed the definition is correct. If a man does the right thing, then surely he doesn't sin; and if he doesn't do the right thing, then neither has he understood it; if in truth he had understood it, this would at once have moved him to do it, would at once make him an echo of his understanding—*ergo* sin is ignorance.

But where does the difficulty lie? It is to be ascribed to a fact of which the Socratic view itself was aware (though only to a certain degree) and sought to remedy, that it lacks a dialectical determinant for the transition from having understood something to the doing of it. In this transition Christianity makes its start; by proceeding along this path it proves that sin lies in the will, thus attaining the concept of defiance; and then, in order to make the end thoroughly fast,[37] it adjoins to this the dogma of original sin—for, alas, the secret of Speculation's success in comprehending is just this, of sewing without making the end fast and without knotting the thread, and therefore it can marvellously keep on sewing, i.e. keep on

pulling the end through. Christianity, on the contrary, fastens the end by means of the paradox.

In pure ideality, where there is no question of the real individual man, the transition is accomplished by necessity (in the System indeed everything comes about by necessity), in other words, there is no difficulty at all connected with the transition from understanding to doing. This is purely in the Greek spirit—yet not Socratic, for Socrates was too much of an ethicist for that. And quite the same thing is really the secret of the whole of recent philosophy: *cogito ergo sum*, to think is to be. The Christian motto, on the contrary, is: As thou believest, so it comes to pass; or As thou believest, so art thou; to believe is to be. So one can see that modern philosophy is neither more nor less than paganism. But this is not the worst, to be akin to Socrates is not the meanest position. But the entirely unsocratic trait of modern philosophy is that it wants to make itself and us believe that it is Christianity.

In the world of reality, on the other hand, where it is a question of the individual man, there is this little tiny transition from having understood to doing; it is not always *cito citissime*, not *geschwind wie der Wind*, if I may speak German for lack of philosophic terms. On the contrary, here begins a very prolix story.

In the life of spirit, on the other hand, there is no stopping [*Stilstand*] (nor in reality is there any condition [*Tilstand*], everything is actuality): in case then a man the very same second he has known what is right does not do it—well then, first of all, the knowledge stops boiling. And next comes the question how the will likes this thing that is known. If it does not like it, it does not follow that the will goes ahead and does the opposite of that which the intelligence understood, such strong contrasts occur doubtless rather seldom; but the will lets some time pass, there is an interim, that means, "We'll see about that to-morrow." All this while the intelligence becomes more and more obscured, and the lower nature triumphs more and more. For, alas, the good must be done at once—at once, the moment it is known (and hence the transition goes so easily in the pure ideality where everything is "at once"), but the strength of the lower nature consists in dragging a thing out. The will has no particular objection to it—so it says with its fingers crossed. And then when the intelligence has become duly darkened, the intelligence and the will can understand one another better; at last they agree entirely, for now the intelligence has gone over to the side of the will and acknowledges that the thing is quite right as it would have it. And so there live perhaps a

great multitude of men who labor off and on to obscure their ethical and religious understanding which would lead them out into decisions and consequences which the lower nature does not love, extending meanwhile their aesthetic and metaphysical understanding, which ethically is a distraction.

However, with all this we have not yet got any further than the Socratic position; for, as Socrates would say, if this comes about, then it only shows that such a man had not understood what is right. That is to say, the Greek spirit had not the courage to assert that a man knowingly does what is wrong, with knowledge of the right does what is wrong; so Socrates comes to its aid and says, When a man does wrong, he has not understood what is right.

Quite correct, and further than that no *man* can go: no man by himself and of himself can explain what sin is, precisely because he is in sin. All his talk about sin is at bottom palliation for sin, an excuse, a sinful mitigation. Hence Christianity begins also in another way, by declaring that there must be a revelation from God in order to instruct man as to what sin is, that sin does not consist in the fact that man has not understood what is right, but in the fact that he will not understand it, and in the fact that he will not do it.

With respect to the distinction between not being *able* to understand and not being *willing* to understand, even Socrates furnishes no real enlightenment, whereas he is Grand Master above all ironists in operating by means of the distinction between understanding and understanding. Socrates explains that he who does not do the right thing has not understood it; but Christianity goes a little further back and says, it is because he will not understand it, and this in turn is because he does not will the right. And in the next place, describing what properly is defiance, it teaches that a man does wrong although he understands what is right, or forbears to do right although he understands what is right; in short, the Christian doctrine of sin is pure impertinence against man, accusation upon accusation; it is the charge which the Deity as prosecutor takes the liberty of lodging against man.

But can anyone comprehend this Christian doctrine? By no means—this too is Christian, and so is an offense. It must be believed. Comprehension is conterminous with man's relation to the human, but faith is man's relation to the divine. How then does Christianity explain this incomprehensible? Quite consistently, in an equally incomprehensible way, by means of the fact that it is revealed.

So then, Christianly understood, sin lies in the will, not in the intellect; and this corruption of the will goes well beyond the consciousness of the individual. This is the perfectly consistent declaration, for otherwise the question how sin began must arise with respect to each individual.

Here again we have the criterion of the offense. The possibility of the offense consists in the fact that there has to be a revelation from God to enlighten man as to what sin is and how deep it lies. The natural man, the pagan, thinks thus: "O well, I admit that I have not understood everything in heaven and earth; if there is to be a revelation, let it inform us about the heavenly; but that there should be a revelation to explain what sin is, that is the most preposterous thing of all. I don't pretend to be a perfect man, far from it, but I know and I am willing to concede how far I am from perfection—ought I not then to know what sin is?" But Christianity makes answer, "No, that is what you know least about, how far you are from perfection, and what sin is." Behold, in this sense, in a Christian sense, sin doubtless is ignorance, it is ignorance of what sin is.

The definition of sin which was given in the preceding chapter therefore still needs to be completed: sin is, after having been informed by a revelation from God what sin is, then be-

fore God in despair not to will to be oneself, or before God in despair to will to be oneself.

CHAPTER 3

SIN IS NOT A NEGATION BUT A POSITION

For the truth of this affirmation the orthodox dogmatic as a whole has constantly contended, and it has rejected as pantheistic every definition of sin which makes it something negative—weakness, sensuality, finiteness, ignorance, etc. Orthodoxy has perceived very rightly that here is where the battle has to be fought, or (to recall the foregoing) that it is here the end must be made fast, that here is the place to put up resistence. Orthodoxy has rightly perceived that, if sin is defined negatively, all of Christianity totters. Therefore orthodoxy insists that there must be a revelation from God in order to teach fallen men what sin is, a revelation which, quite consistently, must be believed, since it is a dogma. And naturally paradox, faith, dogma, these three determinants, form an alliance and accord which is the firmest support and bulwark against pagan wisdom.

So it is with orthodoxy. By a strange misunderstanding, a so-called speculative dogmatic,[38] which certainly has suspicious dealings with philosophy, has entertained the notion that it

is able to *comprehend* this definition of sin as a position.[39] But if this is true, then sin is a negation. The secret of all comprehending is that the very act of comprehension is higher than every position which it posits. The concept posits a position, but the fact that it is comprehended means precisely that it is negated. The speculative dogmatic, being itself aware of this to a certain degree, has known no other way to help itself but by the maneuver, not very seemly in a philosophic science, of throwing out a detachment of asseverations at the point where a movement is being made. One asseverates, each time more solemnly than the last, and with more and more oaths and curses, that sin is a position, that to say that it is merely a negation is pantheism and rationalism, and God knows what all, but altogether something which the speculative dogmatic renunciates and abhors—and then one goes on to comprehend what it means that sin is a position. That is to say that after all it is a position only up to a certain degree, not any more so than that one can after all comprehend it.

And the same duplicity of speculation is manifested also at another point, which is, however, related to the same subject. The interpretation of sin, or the way sin is defined, is decisive for the interpretation of repentance. Then since this thing of negating a negation is

so speculative, there is nothing else to be done, repentance must be a negation of the negation —and so sin becomes the negation.

However, it is certainly very much to be desired that a sober thinker would for once explain how far this purely logical process, which recalls the grammatical rule that two negatives make an affirmative, and the mathematical rule that two minuses are a plus—how far, I say, this logical process is valid in the world of reality, in the world of qualities; whether after all the qualities are not subject to a different dialectic; whether in this case "transition" does not play a different rôle. *Sub specie aeterni*, *aeterno modo*, etc. the element of time is lacking in which things can be spaced out, and hence everything is transition or nothing is. In this abstract medium to posit is *eo ipso* the same thing as to cancel or "resolve." But to regard reality in the same way is pretty close to madness. One can say also *in abstracto* that the perfect tense follows the imperfect. But if in the world of reality a man were to infer that it followed by itself and followed at once, that a work he had not completed (the imperfect) became complete (the perfect)—he surely would be crazy. But so it is too with the so-called "position" of sin when the medium in which it is posited is pure thinking; that medium is far too unstable to insure that this as-

sertion that sin is a position can be taken seriously.

However, all such questions are aside from the issue which immediately concerns me here. I am merely keeping a steady hold upon the Christian dogma that sin is a position—not, however, as though it could be comprehended, but as a paradox which must be believed. To my way of thinking, this is the correct thing. If only one can get it made manifest that all attempts at comprehending are self-contradictory, then the thing assumes the correct position, and then it becomes clear that it must be left to faith whether one will believe or not.

I can well comprehend (this being not too divine a matter to be comprehended) that one who just simply has to comprehend, and only can think of such matters as offer themselves to comprehension, may find this material very scanty. But in case the whole of Christianity hinges upon this, that it must be believed, not comprehended, that it *either* must be believed / *or* one must be offended at it—is it then so meritorious to be determined to comprehend it? Is it meritorious, or is it not rather insolence or thoughtlessness, to will to comprehend that which is not willing to be comprehended? When a King takes the notion of wishing to be entirely incognito, to be treated in all respects as a simple man, is it then, just because in gen-

eral it seems to men a greater distinction to do him royal homage, is it then the correct thing to do it? Or is it not precisely to assert oneself and one's own way of thinking directly in opposition to the King's will? Is it not to do as one wilfully prefers to do, instead of deferring to the King's will? Or would it, I wonder, give pleasure to the King in proportion as such a man was more ingenious in displaying toward him the proper reverence of a subject when the King does not wish to be treated in that way—that is to say, the more ingenious such a man might be in acting contrary to the King's will?

So let others admire and extoll him who claims to be able to comprehend Christianity—I regard it as a plain ethical duty, which perhaps demands no little self-denial in such speculative times when all "the others" are busy about comprehending—I regard it then as a plain duty to admit that one neither can nor shall comprehend it. Just this, however, is doubtless what the age, what Christendom, needs, namely, a little Socratic ignorance in relation to the Christian—but I say emphatically *Socratic* ignorance. Let us never forget (yet after all how many are there that ever have known it or thought of it?)—let us never forget that the ignorance of Socrates was a kind of godly fear and divine worship, that his ignorance was the Greek rendering of the Jew-

ish perception that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Let us never forget that precisely out of reverence for the Deity he was ignorant, that, so far as a pagan could be, he kept watch as a *judge* on the border between God /and man, watching out to see that the deep gulf of qualitative distinction be firmly fixed between them, between God /and man, that God /and man may not in a way, *philosophice*, *poetice*, etc., coalesce into one. Lo, for this reason Socrates was the ignorant man, and for this reason the Deity recognized him as the most knowing.—But Christianity teaches that everything Christian exists only for faith; for this reason precisely it wills to be a Socratic, a Godfearing ignorance, which by ignorance defends faith against speculation, keeping watch to see that the deep gulf of qualitative distinction between God /and man may be firmly fixed, as it is in the paradox and in faith, lest God /and man, still more dreadfully than ever it occurred in paganism, might in a way, *philosophice*, *poetice*, etc., coalesce into one...in the System.

Only from one side can there be any question here of illuminating the fact that sin is a position. In the foregoing description of despair attention was constantly directed to an ascending scale. The expression for the scale was in part potentiation of consciousness of the self, in

part potentiation as from passive suffering to conscious action. Both expressions in combination are in turn the expression for the fact that despair does not come from without but from within. And in the same degree despair is more and more positive [*ponirende.*] But according to the definition of sin we have formulated, a constituent of sin is the self as infinitely potentiated by the conception of God, and thus in turn it is the greatest possible consciousness of sin as a deed. This is the expression for the fact that sin is a position; the positive factor in it is precisely this, that it is *before God.*

Moreover, the determination of sin as a position involves also, in an entirely different sense, the possibility of offense, the paradox. For the paradox results from the doctrine of the atonement. First Christianity goes ahead and establishes sin so securely as a position that the human understanding never can comprehend it; and then it is the same Christian doctrine which in turn undertakes to do away with this position so completely that the human understanding never can comprehend it. Speculation, which chatters itself away from the paradoxes, lops a little bit off at both ends, and so it goes easier: it does not make sin so entirely positive—and in spite of this it cannot get it through its head that sin should be entirely forgotten.[40] But Christianity, which is the first

discoverer of the paradoxes, is in this case also as paradoxical as possible; it works directly against itself when it establishes sin so securely as a position that it seems a perfect impossibility to do away with it again—and then it is precisely Christianity which, by the atonement, would do away with it so completely that it is as though drowned in the sea.

APPENDIX TO I

BUT THEN IN A CERTAIN SENSE DOES NOT SIN BECOME A GREAT RARITY? (*THE MORAL*)

It was remarked in Part First that the more intense despair becomes, the more rare it is in the world. But now, as we have seen, sin is that despair which has been still further potentiated and qualitatively potentiated, and so this surely must be exceedingly rare! Marvellous objection! Christianity has concluded all under sin; we have endeavored to represent the Christian position as rigorously as possible—and from this results the strange conclusion that sin is not to be found at all in paganism, but only in Judaism and Christianity, and there again only very rarely!

And yet this is (but only in one sense) perfectly correct. "After having been informed by a revelation from God what sin is, then before God in despair not to will to be oneself, or before God in despair to will to be oneself," is to sin—and certainly it is rare for a man to be so developed, so transparent to himself, that this can fit his case. But what logically follows from this? Yea, one may well take heed of this, for here there is a peculiar dialectical turn. From the fact that a man is not in a more intense despair it did not follow that he is not in despair. On the contrary, it was proved precisely that most men, by far the majority of men, are in despair, despair in a lower form. There is no merit in being in despair in a higher degree. Aesthetically it is an advantage, for aesthetically one has regard merely to strength; but ethically the more intense kind of despair is further from salvation than is the lower.

And so it is also in the case of sin. The lives of most men, being determined by a dialectic of indifference, are so remote from the good (faith) that they are almost too spiritless to be called sin, yes, almost too spiritless to be called despair.

To be in the strictest sense a sinner is again very far from being meritorious. But then on the other hand how on earth can one expect to find an essential consciousness of sin (and after

all that is what Christianity wants) in a life which is so retarded by triviality, by a chattering imitation of "the others," that one hardly can call it sin, that it is too spiritless to be so called, and fit only, as the Scripture says, to be "spewed out"?

But this is not the end of the matter, for the dialectic of sin merely catches one in another way. For how does it come about that a man's life becomes so spiritless that it is as if Christianity could not be brought into relation to it, as when a jack-screw (and like a jack-screw is the uplifting power of Christianity) cannot be employed because there is no solid ground but only moss and bog? Is there anything that stands in a man's way? No, it is man's own fault. No man is born with spiritlessness, and however many there be who in death bring with them this as the only acquisition of their lives—this is not the fault of life.

But it must be said, and as outspokenly as possible, that the so-called Christendom (in which after a sort all men are Christians in a way, so that there are just as many, precisely as many Christians as there are men)—it must be said that not only is it a wretched edition of Christianity, full of misprints disturbing to the sense, and of senseless omissions and additions, but that it has abusively taken Christianity's name in vain.[41] In a small country there are

born hardly three poets in every generation, but of priests there are a plenty, many more than can get appointments. With regard to a poet people speak of his having a call; but as for becoming a priest, it seems enough to the generality of men (and that means of Christians) that one has taken an examination. And yet, alas, a true priest is even more rare than a true poet, and the word "call" originally was used in a religious sense. But with respect to being a poet people still retain a notion that it is something, and that there is something in it that a man is called. On the other hand, to be a priest is in the eyes of the generality of men (and so also of Christians) a thing bereft of every uplifting conception, lacking the least trace of the mysterious, *in puris naturalibus* it is a career. "Call" means a benefice; people talk about getting a call; but about having a call—O yes, they talk about being "called" for trumps.

And, alas, the fate of this word in Christendom is like a motto for Christianity as a whole. The misfortune is not that Christian truth is never uttered (just as it is not the misfortune that there are not priests enough), but that it is uttered in such a way that at last the generality of men attach to it no significance whatever (just as the generality of men attach to being a priest no other significance than that which

goes with the week-day occupations of a merchant, attorney, book-binder, veterinary, etc.), so that the highest things make no impression at all, but sound out and are heard as something which somehow, God knows how, has become use and wont, like so many other things. What wonder then that certain people, instead of finding their own conduct indefensible, find it incumbent upon them to defend Christianity.

After all, a priest surely ought to be a believer. And think what a believer is! A believer is surely a lover, yea, of all lovers the most in love. With respect to enthusiasm a lover is after all only a stripling in comparison with a believer. Think now of a lover. He would be capable, would he not, day in and day out, as long as it was day and well into the night, of talking about his love. But dost thou believe it could occur to him, dost thou believe it would be possible for him, dost thou not believe that it would be an abomination to him, to talk in such a way as to try to prove by three reasons that there is after all something in this thing of being in love?—pretty much as when the parson proves by three reasons that it is profitable to pray, so that this thing of prayer has sunk so low in price that there must be three reasons alleged to bring it a little bit into repute. Or as when the parson (and this is the

same thing, only still more laughable) proves by three reasons that to pray is a bliss surpassing all understanding. Oh, priceless anti-climax! The fact that something surpasses all understanding is proved by three...reasons, which, whatever else they may be good for, surely do not surpass the understanding, but precisely on the contrary make it evident to the understanding that this bliss does not surpass the understanding; for, after all, reasons certainly lie within the compass of the understanding. No, for that which surpasses the understanding, and for him who believes in it, the three reasons signify no more than three bottles or three red deer!—And now further. Dost thou believe it would occur to a lover to put up a defense for his love, that is, to admit that to him it was not the absolute, unconditionally the absolute, but that he thinks this thought of love along with objections against it, and from this proceeds the defense; that is to say, dost thou believe that he could or would concede that he was not in love, denounce himself as not being a lover? And in case a man were to propose to a lover to talk thus, dost thou not believe that he would regard that man as mad? And in case, besides being in love, he was something of an observer, dost thou not believe that he would suspect that the man who made to him this proposal had never known what it is

to be in love, or would like to get him to betray and deny his love...by defending it?—Is it not evident that it could never occur to one who really is in love to want to prove it by three reasons or to defend it? For in fact he himself is that which is more than all reasons and more than every defense—he is a lover. And he who does this is not in love, he merely gives himself out [*adgiver*] to be that, and unfortunately—or fortunately—he does it so stupidly that he merely denounces [*afgiver*] himself as one who is not in love.

But this is just the way Christianity is talked about...by believing priests. They either "defend" Christianity, or they translate it into "reasons"—if they are not at the same time dabbling in "comprehending" it speculatively. This is what is called preaching, and it is regarded in Christendom as already a big thing that such preaching is done and that some hear it. And it is precisely for this reason that Christendom (here is the proof of it) is so far from being what it calls itself that the lives of most men are, Christianly understood, too spiritless even to be called in a strictly Christian sense sin.

II. CONTINUATION OF SIN

EVERY state or condition in sin is new sin, or, as it might be more exactly expressed and as it will be expressed in the following, the state of being in sin is the new sin, is emphatically the sin. This seems perhaps to the sinner an exaggeration; he at the most recognizes every actual sin as a new sin. But eternity which keeps his accounts must register the state of being in sin as a new sin. It has only two rubrics, and "everything which is not of faith is sin"; every unrepented sin is a new sin. But how rare is the man who possesses continuity with respect to his consciousness of himself! Generally men are only momentarily conscious, conscious in the great decisions, but the daily things are not computed at all; such men are spirit (if this word may be applied to them) once a week for one hour—of course that is a pretty bestial way of being spirit. Eternity, however, is essential continuity and requires this of man, or requires that he shall be conscious of himself as spirit and shall have faith. The sinner on the other hand is so thoroughly in the power of sin that he has no conception of its totalitarian character, or that he is in the byway of perdition. He takes into account only each individual new

sin by which he acquires new headway onward along the path of perdition, just as if the previous instant he were not going with the speed of the previous sins along that same path. So natural has sin become to him, or sin has so become his second nature, that he finds the daily continuance quite a matter of course, and it is only when by a new sin he acquires as it were new headway that for an instant he is made aware. By perdition he is blinded to the fact that his life, instead of possessing the essential continuity of the eternal by being before God in faith, has the continuity of sin.

But, "The continuity of sin!" Is not sin precisely the discontinuous?[42] Lo, here we have again the notion that sin is merely a negation to which one can acquire no title, as one can acquire no title to stolen property, a negation, an impotent attempt to give itself consistency, which nevertheless, suffering as it does from the torture of impotence in the defiance of despair, it is not able to do. Yes, so it is speculatively; but Christianly sin is (and this has to be believed, it is indeed the paradox which no man can comprehend)—sin is a position which out of itself develops a more and more positive [*ponirende*] continuity.

And the law for the growth of this continuity is moreover different from the law which applies to a debt or to a negation. For a debt does

not grow because it is not paid, it grows every time it is added to. But sin grows every instant one does not get out of it. It is as far as possible from being true that the sinner is right in only regarding every new sin as an increase of sin—so far from being true that, Christianly understood, the state of remaining in sin is really a greater sin. We have even a proverb which says that to sin is human, but to remain in sin is devilish. But Christianly this proverb must be understood in a rather different sense. The merely desultory way of conceiving the case, which has regard only to the new sin and passes over the intermediate state, the interval between the particular sins, is just as superficial a way of conceiving it as it would be to assume that the railway train moved only when the locomotive puffed. No, this puffing and the onrush which succeeds it is really not the thing that has to be considered, but rather the even momentum with which the locomotive proceeds and which occasions the puffing. And so it is with sin. The state of remaining in sin is in the deepest sense sin, the particular sins are not the continuation of sin, but they are the expression for the continuation of sin; in the particular new sins the momentum of sin merely becomes more observable.

The state of being in sin is a worse sin than the particular sins, it is the sin emphatically,

and thus understood it is true that the state of remaining in sin is the continuation of sin, is a new sin. Generally one understands this differently, one understands that the one sin gives birth to new sin. But this has a far deeper ground for the fact that the state of being in sin is new sin. Psychologically it is a masterly stroke of Shakespeare to let Macbeth say (Act iii, Scene 2), *Sünentsprossne Werke erlangen nur durch Sunde Kraft und Stärke.*"[43] That is to say, sin is within itself a consistency, and in this consistency of evil within itself it possesses a certain power. But one never reaches such a point of view when one considers merely the particular sins.

Doubtless most men live with far too little consciousness of themselves to have a conception of what consistency is; that is to say, they do not exist *qua* spirit. Their lives (either with a certain childish and lovable naïveté or in sheer banality) consist in some act or another, some occurrence, this or that; and then they do something good, then in turn something wrong, and then it begins all over again; now they are in despair, for an afternoon, perhaps for three weeks, but then they are jovial again, and then again they are a whole day in despair. They take a hand in the game of life as it were, but they never have the experience of staking all upon one throw, never attain the conception

of an infinite self-consistency. Therefore among themselves their talk is always about the particular, particular deeds, particular sins.

Every existence which is under the rubric of spirit (even if it is such only on its own responsibility and at its own peril) has essentially consistency within itself, and consistency in something higher, at least in an idea. But again such an existence fears infinitely every inconsistency, because it has an infinite conception of what the consequence may be, that because of it one might be wrenched out of the totality in which one has one's life. The least inconsistency is a prodigious loss, for with that a man in fact loses consistency; that same instant the charm is perhaps broken, the mysterious power which bound all powers in harmony is enfeebled, the spring loses its tension, the whole machinery is a chaos where the forces fight in rebellion against one another, to the injury of the self, and therein there is no accord with oneself, no momentum, no impetus. The prodigious machine which in consistency was so compliant with its iron strength, so pliable with all its power, is in disorder; and the more excellent the machine was, all the more frightful is the confusion.—The believer, who reposes in and has his strength in the consistency of the

good, has an infinite fear of even the least sin, for he stands to lose infinitely. The immediate men—the childlike or the childish—have no totality to lose, they constantly lose and win only the particular thing and in the particular instance.

But as with the believer, so it is also with his counterpart, the demoniac man, with respect to the consistency of sin in itself. As the drunkard steadily keeps up the intoxication from day to day, for fear of the languor which would ensue from arresting it, and the possible consequences if for one day he were to remain entirely sober —so it is with the demoniac. Yea, just as the good man, if one were to approach him temptingly, picturing sin in one or another alluring form, would bid him, "tempt me not," so one has instances of exactly the same thing on the part of the demoniac. Face to face with one who is stronger than he in the good, the demoniac, when one would picture to him the good in its blissful sublimity, might beg for himself, beg him with tears in his eyes, that he would not talk to him, would not, as he expresses it, make him weak. Just because the demoniac is consistent in himself and in the consistency of evil, just for this cause he also has a totality to lose. A single instant outside of his consistency, one

single dietetic imprudence, one single glance aside, one instant when the whole thing, or at least a part thereof, is seen and understood in a different way—and with that, he would never more be himself, he says. That is, he has given up the good in despair, it could not help him anyway, he says, but it well might disturb him, make it impossible for him ever again to acquire the full momentum of consistency, make him weak. Only in the continuation of sin he is himself, only in that does he live and have an impression of himself. What does this mean? It means that the state of being in sin is that which, in the depth to which he has sunk, holds him together, impiously strengthening him by consistency; it is not the particular new sin which (crazy as it sounds to say it) helps him, but the particular new sin is merely the expression for the state of being in sin which properly is the sin.

By "the continuation in sin," which is the theme we now have to deal with, we are to think not so much of the particular new sins as of the state of being in sin, which in turn becomes the potentiation of sin in itself, an abiding in the state of sin with consciousness thereof, so that the law for the movement in potentiation is, here as everywhere, in the inward direction, in more and more intense consciousness.

CHAPTER 1

THE SIN OF DESPAIRING OVER ONE'S SIN

Sin is despair, the potentiation of this is the new sin of despairing over one's sin. It can easily be seen moreover that this is characterized as potentiation. It is not a new sin in the sense of repetition, as in the case of a man who once stole $100 and another time steals $1,000. No, it is not a question of particular acts of sin; the state of sin is sin, and this is potentiated in a new consciousness.

Despairing over one's sin is the expression for the fact that sin has become or would become consistent in itself. It will have nothing to do with the good, will not be weak enough to harken once in a while to another sort of talk. No, it will hear only itself, have to do only with itself, shut itself in with itself, yea, enclose itself within one enclosure more and by despair over its sin secure itself against every assault of the good or every aspiration after it. It is conscious of having cut the bridge behind it and so of being inaccessible to the good as the good is to it, so that though in a weak moment it were to will the good, this would nevertheless be impossible. Sin itself is detachment from the good, but despair over sin is a second detachment. This of course tortures out of sin its utmost demoniac

powers, bestowing upon it the ungodly hardiness or obduracy which must constantly regard everything which is of the nature of repentance and everything which is of the nature of grace not only as empty and meaningless but as its foe, as the thing which most of all it has to guard against, quite in the same way as the good guards itself against temptation. So understood, it is rightly said by Mephistopheles in *Faust*[44] that nothing is more miserable than a devil who despairs; for by despairing must here be understood unwillingness to hear anything about repentance and grace. To indicate the character of this potentiation from sin to despair over sin one might say that the former is the breach with the good, the latter is the breach with repentance.

Despair over sin is an attempt to maintain oneself by sinking still deeper. As one who ascends in a balloon rises by casting weights from him, so does the despairing man sink by casting from him the good (for the weight of the good is uplift), he sinks, doubtless he thinks he is rising—he does indeed become lighter. Sin itself is the struggle of despair; but then when strength is exhausted there must needs be a new potentiation, a new demoniacal introversion, and this is despair over one's sin. This is a step in advance, an ascent in the demoniacal, but of course it means sinking deeper in sin. It

is an attempt to impart to sin as a positive power firmness and interest, by the fact that now it is eternally decided that one will hear nothing about repentance, nothing about grace. Nevertheless despair over sin is conscious of its own emptiness, conscious of the fact that it has nothing whatever to live on, not even a lofty conception of one's own self. Psychologically it is a masterly line Macbeth utters after the murder when he is in despair over his sin (Act ii, Scene 3):

> For, from this instant,
> There's nothing serious in mortality:
> All is but toys: renown and grace is dead.

The masterly double stroke is in the last words, "*renown* and *grace*." By sin, that is to say, by despairing over his sin, he has lost every relation to grace—and to himself at the same time. His selfish self culminates in ambition. Now he has indeed become king, and yet, by despairing over his sin, and about the reality of repentance, about grace, he has also lost himself, he cannot even maintain himself in his own eyes, and he is precisely as far from being able to enjoy his own self in ambition as he is from grasping grace.

In real life (in so far as despair over sin actually occurs in life—but there occurs at all

events something they call such) people generally have a mistaken notion of despair over sin, presumably because in the world one generally has to do with levity, thoughtlessness and pure prattle, and therefore becomes quite solemn and reverently lifts the hat before every expression of something deeper. Either in confused obscurity about oneself and one's significance, or with a trace of hypocrisy, or by the help of cunning and sophistry which is present in all despair, despair over sin is not indisposed to bestow upon itself the appearance of something good. So it is supposed to be an expression for a deep nature which thus takes its sin so much to heart. I will adduce an example. When a man who has been addicted to one sin or another, but then for a long while has withstood temptation and conquered—if he has a relapse and again succumbs to temptation, the dejection which ensues is by no means always sorrow over sin. It may be something else, for the matter of that it may be exasperation against providence, as if it were providence which had allowed him to fall into temptation, as if it ought not to have been so hard on him, since for a long while he had victoriously withstood temptation. But at any rate it is womanish without more ado to regard this sorrow as good, not to be in the least observant of the duplicity there is in all passion-

ateness, which in turn has this ominous consequence that at times the passionate man understands afterwards, almost to the point of frenzy, that he has said exactly the opposite of that which he meant to say. Such a man asseverated with stronger and stronger expressions how much this relapse tortures and torments him, how it brings him to despair, "I can never forgive myself for it," he says. And all this is supposed to be the expression for how much good there dwells within him, what a deep nature he is. In this representation I intentionally introduced the catchword, "I can never forgive myself for it," precisely the word which is commonly used in such a connection. And precisely by this catchword one can orient oneself dialectically. He can never forgive himself for it—but now in case God would forgive him for it, he might well have the kindness to forgive himself. No, his despair over sin, and all the more, the more it storms in the passion of expression, whereby without being aware of it in the least he informs against himself when he "never can forgive himself" that he could sin thus (for this sort of talk is pretty nearly the opposite of penitent contrition which prays God for forgiveness)—this despair is far from being a characteristic of the good, rather it is a more intensive characterization of sin, the intensity of which is a deeper sinking into sin. The

fact is that during the time he victoriously withstood temptation he was in his own eyes better than he actually was, he was proud of himself. It is now in the interest of pride that the past should be something entirely left behind. But in the relapse the past suddenly becomes again entirely present. This reminder his pride cannot endure, and hence the deep distress etc. But the direction of this distress is evidently away from God, manifesting a hidden self-love and pride—instead of humbly beginning by thanking God humbly for helping him so long to withstand temptation, acknowledging before God and before himself that this after all is much more than he had deserved, and so humbling himself under the remembrance of what he had been.

In this instance as usual the explanation given in the old works of edification[45] is so profound, so understanding, so instructive. They teach that God sometimes permits the believer to stumble and fall into one temptation or another—precisely to humble him and thereby confirm him the more in the good; the contrast between the relapse and the perhaps considerable progress in the good is so humiliating, the identity with himself so painful. The better a man is, the more dangerous, in case he does not make the right turn, is even the least little bit of impatience. He may perhaps for sorrow

sink into the darkest melancholy—and a fool of a pastor may not be far from admiring his deep soul and the power of good which is in him... as though this were the good. And his wife, yea, she feels herself deeply humbled in comparison with such an earnest and holy man who can thus sorrow for his sin. Perhaps his talk is still more deceptive, he perhaps does not say, I can never forgive myself for it (as if before he had forgiven himself for his sins—a blasphemy), no, he talks about God never forgiving him for it. And, alas, this is only a mystification. His sorrow, his concern, his despair, is selfish (like the dread of sin which at times almost frightens a man into sin) because it is self-love which would like to be proud of itself, like to be without sin—and consolation is what he is least in need of, wherefore also the prodigious quantity of consoling thoughts the physicians of the soul prescribe only make the sickness worse.

CHAPTER 2

THE SIN OF DESPAIRING OF* THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS (OFFENSE)

The potentiation in consciousness of the self is in this instance knowledge of Christ, being a self face to face with Christ. First there came (in Part First) ignorance of having an eternal self; then knowledge of having a self wherein there is after all something eternal. Thereupon (as a transition to Part Second) it was shown that this distinction is referable to the self which has a human conception of itself or whose goal is man. The contrast to this was a self face to face with God, and this was taken as the basis of the definition of sin.

Now comes a self face to face with Christ—a self which nevertheless in despair will not be itself, or in despair will be itself. For despair of the forgiveness of sins must be related to one or the other formula of despair: that of weakness, or that of defiance; that of weakness which being offended does not dare to believe, or that of defiance which being offended will not believe. Only in this case (since here it is not a question about being oneself simply, but about being oneself as characterized by one's imperfection) defiance is the converse of what it

* Mark the distinction between despairing *over* one's sin, and despairing *of* the forgiveness of sins.

ordinarily is. Ordinarily weakness is: in despair not to will to be oneself.[46] Here this is defiance; for here it is clearly defiance not to will to be the man one is, a sinner, and for this reason to will to dispense with the forgiveness of sins. Ordinarily defiance is: in despair to will to be oneself. Here this weakness is: in despair to will to be oneself, a sinner, in such wise that there is no forgiveness.

A self face to face with Christ is a self potentiated by the prodigious concession of God, potentiated by the prodigious emphasis which falls upon it for the fact that God also for the sake of this self let Himself to be born, became man, suffered, died. As was said in the foregoing, "the more conception of God, the more self," so here it is true that the more conception of Christ, the more self. A self is qualitatively what its measure is. That Christ is the measure is on God's part attested as the expression for the immense reality a self possesses; for it is true for the first time in Christ that God is man's goal and measure, or measure and goal.—But the more self, the more intense the sin.

There is also another side from which the potentiation in sin can be shown. In the first instance we considered that sin was despair, its potentiation was despair over sin. But now God offers reconciliation in the forgiveness of sins. Yet the sinner despairs, and despair acquires a

still deeper expression. It now relates itself after a sort to God, but precisely thereby it is still further away, still more deeply sunken in sin. When the sinner despairs of the forgiveness of sins it is almost as if he were directly picking a quarrel with God, it sounds in fact like a rejoinder when he says, "No, there is not any forgiveness of sins, it is an impossibility"; this looks like a hand-to-hand scuffle. But yet a man must remove himself to a qualitative distance from God in order to be able to say this and in order that it may be heard, and in order to fight *comminus* he must be *eminus;*[47] so strangely constructed in an acoustic sense is the world of spirit, so strangely are the relationships of distance arranged. A man must be as far as possible removed from God for that "No" to be heard, while yet in a way he wants to pick a quarrel with God. The greatest possible nearness to God, actually treading on His toes, means to be far off. In order to behave forwardly toward God one must retire far backward; if one is nearer, one cannot be forward, and if one is forward, this signifies *eo ipso* that one is far off. O human impotence in the face of God! When one behaves forwardly toward a man of high station, one may perhaps as a punishment be cast far away from him; but to behave forwardly toward God one must retire backward far from Him.[48]

In real life the sin of despairing of the forgiveness of sins is generally misunderstood, especially now that they have done away with the ethical, so that one seldom or never hears a sound ethical word. Aesthetic-metaphysically it is honored as a sign of a deep nature that one despairs of the forgiveness of sins, pretty much as if one were to regard it as a sign of a deep nature in a child that it is naughty. On the whole it is unbelievable what confusion has invaded the religious sphere since in man's relationship to God there has been abolished the "Thou shalt," which is the only regulative principle. This "Thou shalt" ought to be a part of every definition of the religious; instead of which people have employed fantastically conceptions of God as an ingredient in human self-importance, so as to be self-important over against God. As in political life one becomes important by belonging to the Opposition, and in the last resort may well wish that there should be a government so that one might at least have something to oppose; so in the last resort one does not wish to abolish God—if merely with a view to becoming still more self-important by being the Opposition. And all that which in the old days was regarded with horror as the expression of impious insubordination has now become spirited, the sign of a deep nature. "Thou shalt *believe*," that is what

was said in the old days, as soberly as possible and in so many words—now it is spirited and the sign of a deep nature not to be able to do so. "Thou shalt believe in the forgiveness of sins," was what they said, and as the only commentary to this text it was said, "It will go ill with thee if thou canst not, for what one shall do, one can do"—now it is spirited and the sign of a deeper nature not to be able to believe it. Splendid result attained by Christendom! If not a word about Christianity were heard, men would not be so conceited (as paganism never has been at any time); but by the help of the fact that Christian conceptions are unchristianly floating in the air they are employed in the interest of this most potentiated impertinence, in so far as they are not misused in another and equally shameless way. For it surely is very epigrammatic that swearing was after all not customary in paganism but on the other hand is properly at home in Christendom; that paganism generally uttered the name of God with great solemnity, with a certain horror, with a dread of the mysterious, whereas in Christendom the name of God is surely the word which occurs most frequently in daily speech and is absolutely the word to which one attaches the least meaning and uses most carelessly, because this poor revealed God (who was so imprudent and unwise as to be-

come revealed instead of keeping Himself hidden as superior persons always do) has become a personage all too well known by the whole population, to whom one renders an exceedingly great service by going once in a while to church, where one is praised for it by the parson, who on God's behalf thanks one for the honor of the visit, confers upon one the title of pious, and on the other hand taunts a bit those who never do God the honor of going to church.

The sin of despairing of the forgiveness of sins is *offense*. The Jews were quite right in being offended at Christ because He would forgive sins. It requires a singularly high degree of dullness (that is to say, the sort ordinarily found in Christendom) in case a man is not a believer (and if he is, then he believes that Christ is God) not to be offended at the fact that a man would forgive sins. And in the next place it requires an equally singular degree of dullness not to be offended at the assertion that sin can be forgiven. This is for the human understanding the most impossible thing. Not that I would extoll it as a sign of genius that one is unable to believe this, for it *shall* be believed.

In paganism of course this sin did not exist. If the pagan might have the true conception of sin (but even this he could not have because he lacked the conception of God), he could not

get further than to despair over his sin. Yea, what is more (and herein lies all the concession one can make to human understanding and human thinking), one might praise the pagan who really managed to despair, not over the world, not over himself in general, but over his sin.* Humanly speaking, both depths of understanding and ethical definitions are requisite for this. No man as such can get further, and seldom does one get so far. But Christianly everything is altered, for thou shalt believe in the forgiveness of sins.

And where does Christendom find itself with reference to the forgiveness of sins? Indeed, the situation of Christendom is really despair over the forgiveness of sins. This, however, must be understood in the sense that Christendom is so backward that it is not even manifest that the situation is such. People have not even reached the consciousness of sin, they know only the

* One will observe that despair over sin is here dialectically conceived in the direction toward faith. That there is this dialectical possibility must never be forgotten, even though this work only deals with despair as sin. This dialectical possibility is due to the fact that despair is also the first factor in faith. On the other hand, when the direction is away from faith, away from the God-relationship, despair over sin is the new sin. In the life of spirit everything is dialectical. Offense is thus, as a possibility annulled, a factor in faith; but offense with a direction away from faith is sin. One can reproach a man for not even being offended at Christianity. When one speaks thus, one speaks of being offended as something good, and on the other hand one may say that to be offended is sin.

kind of sin which paganism also knew, and they live on happily in pagan security. But by the fact that they live in Christendom they go further than paganism, they go on to imagine that this security is...consciousness of the forgiveness of sins. Indeed how can it be otherwise in Christendom? In this the parsons confirm the congregation.

The fundamental misfortune of Christendom is really Christianity, the fact that the doctrine of the God-Man (the Christian understanding of which, be it noted, is secured by the paradox and the possibility of offense) is taken in vain, the qualitative distinction between God and man is pantheistically abolished—first speculatively with an air of superiority, then vulgarly in the streets and alleys. Never anywhere has any doctrine on earth brought God and man so near together as has Christianity; neither could anyone else do it, only God Himself can, every human invention remains after all a dream, an uncertain imagination. Neither has any doctrine ever so carefully defended itself against the most shocking of all blasphemies, that after God had taken this step it then should be taken in vain, as though God and man coalesced in one and the same thing—never has any doctrine ever defended itself against this as Christianity has, which defends itself by the help of the offense. Woe unto

the slack orators, woe unto the loose thinkers, and woe, woe unto all the adherents who have learnt from them and extolled them!

If order is to be maintained in existence—and that after all is what God wills, for He is not a God of confusion—first and foremost it must be remembered that every man is an individual man, is himself conscious of being an individual man. If once men are permitted to coalesce into what Aristotle[49] calls "the multitude," a characteristic of beasts, this abstraction (instead of being regarded as less than nothing, as in fact it is, less than the lowliest individual man) will be regarded as something, and no long time will elapse before this abstraction becomes God. And then, why then in fact it corresponds *philosophice* with the God-Man. Then as people in the various nations have learnt that the multitude overawes the King and the daily papers overawe the Privy Council,[50] so then at last they discover that the *summa summarum* of all men overawes God. This then is called the doctrine of the God-Man or the doctrine that God and men are *idem per idem*. Naturally several of the philosophers who took part in spreading this doctrine of the preponderance of the generations of mankind over the individual now turn away in disgust when their doctrine has sunk so low that the mob is God. But these philosophers forget that after all

this was their doctrine, they overlook the fact that it was not more true when the superior men accepted it, when the élite of the superior class or an elect circle of philosophers was the Incarnation.

This means that the doctrine of the God-Man has made Christendom impudent. It almost appears as if God had been too weak. It is as though it had come to pass with Him as with the good-natured man who makes too great a concession and is rewarded by ingratitude. It was God who discovered the doctrine of the God-Man, and now Christendom has got the thing turned topsy-turvy and imputes to God consanguinity, so that the concession God has made means pretty much what in these times it means when a king grants a freer constitution—and one knows well enough what that means, "He pretty well had to." It is as though God had got Himself into an embarrassing situation; it is as though the shrewd man were in the right if he were to say to God, "It is Thine own fault. Why hast Thou put Thyself upon such familiar terms with man? It never would have occurred to anyone, never have entered into any man's heart, that there might be likeness between God and man. It was Thou Thyself that had this proclaimed, now Thou art reaping the fruits."

Yet Christianity has secured itself from the very beginning. It begins with the doctrine of sin. The category of sin is the category of the individual. Speculatively sin cannot be thought at all. The individual man is subsumed under the concept; one cannot think an individual man but only the concept man.—Hence it is that Speculation at once reaches the doctrine of the preponderance of the generations over the individual; for it is not to be expected that Speculation should recognize the *impotence* of the concept in relation to reality.—But as one cannot think an individual man, so neither can one think an individual sinner; one can think sin (then it becomes negative), but not an individual sinner. Just for this reason, however, there can be no seriousness about sin when it is merely thought. For seriousness is precisely the fact that thou and I are sinners. Seriousness is not sin in general, but the emphasis of seriousness falls upon the sinner who is an individual. In relation to "the individual man" Speculation, if it is consistent, must think very scornfully of what it is to be an individual or that it is something which cannot be thought. If it would do anything in this line, it must say to the individual, "Is that anything to waste time on? Above all try to forget it, to be an individual man is not to be anything—think, and then thou art the whole of humanity, *cogito ergo*

sum." This, however, might perhaps be a lie, and the individual might be the highest. Yet suppose it is so. But to be entirely consistent Speculation must also say, "The thing of being an individual sinner, that's not to be anything, it is subsumed under the concept, waste no time on it etc." And then what further? Is one perhaps to think sin instead of being an individual sinner?—just as one was exhorted to think the concept of man instead of being the individual man. And then what further? Does a man become himself "sin" by thinking sin? *Cogito ergo sum.* A capital proposal! However, one does not even in this case need to be afraid of becoming sin...the pure sin, for sin cannot be thought. This after all Speculation itself might concede, since sin is in fact a falling away from the concept. But not to dispute any longer *e concessis*, the principal difficulty is another. Speculation does not take heed of the fact that in relation to sin the ethical has its place, which employs an emphasis which is the converse of that of Speculation and accomplishes the opposite development; for the ethical does not abstract from reality but goes deeper into reality, operating essentially by the aid of the category of the individual, which is the category overlooked and despised by Speculation. Sin is a characteristic of the individual; it is frivolity and a new sin to act as if it were

nothing to be an individual sinner. Here Christianity is in place. It marks a cross before Speculation. It is as impossible for Speculation to get out of this difficulty as for a sailing vessel to sail directly against a contrary wind. The seriousness of sin is its reality in the individual, whether it be thou or I. Speculatively one has to look away from the individual. So it is only frivolously one can talk speculatively about sin. The dialectic of sin is directly contrary to that of Speculation.

Here Christianity begins with the doctrine of sin, and therefore with the individual.* For it is

* The doctrine of the sin of the human race has often been misused because it has not been noticed that sin, common though it is to all, does not gather men together in a common concept, into a society or a partnership ("any more than out in the churchyard the multitude of the dead constitute a society"), but it splits men into individuals and holds every individual fast as a sinner—a splitting which in another sense is both in correspondence with and teleologically in the direction of the perfection of existence. This men have not observed, and so they have let the fallen race become once for all good again in Christ. And so in turn they have saddled God with an abstraction which, as an abstraction, presumes to claim kinship with Him. But this is a false pretext which only makes men insolent For if the individual is to feel himself akin to God (and this is the doctrine of Christianity), the whole weight of this falls upon him in fear and trembling, and he must discover (if it were not an old discovery) the possibility of offense But if the individual is to attain this glory through an abstraction, the thing becomes too easy, and essentially it is taken in vain. The individual does not in this case get the prodigious weight of God, which by humiliation presses down as deeply as it uplifts; the individual imagines that he possesses everything as a matter of course by participating in this abstrac-

Christianity to be sure which has taught this about the God-Man, about the likeness between God and man, but Christianity is a great hater of wanton and impertinent forwardness. By the help of the doctrine of sin and of the individual sinner God and Christ have been secured once for all, and far better than any king, against the nation, the people, the crowd, etc., *item* against every demand for a freer constitution. All these abstractions are before God nonexistent, before God in Christ there live only individual men (sinners)—yet God can well oversee the whole, He can care for the sparrows too. God is wholly a friend of order, and to that end He is Himself present at every point, in every instant, He is omnipresent—which is specified in the text-books as one of the titles by which God is called, which men once in a while think about a little but surely never try to think every instant. His concept is not like that of man under which the individual is subsumed as a thing which is absorbed by the concept, His concept comprises everything, and in another sense He has no

tion. Being a man is not like being an animal, where the specimen is always less than the species. Man is distinguished from other animals not only by the advantages which are commonly enumerated, but qualitatively by the fact that the individual is more than the species. And this characteristic is again dialectical, it means that the individual is a sinner, but then again that it is perfection to be the individual.

concept. God does not help Himself by an abbreviation, He comprehends (*comprehendit*) reality itself, all the individuals; for Him the individual is not subsumed under the concept.

The doctrine of sin, the doctrine that we are sinners, thou and I, which absolutely disperses the "crowd," fixes then the qualitative distinction between God and man more deeply than ever it was fixed anywhere—for again this God alone can do, sin is in fact *before God* etc. In no respect is a man so different from God as in the fact that he is a sinner, as every man is, and is a sinner "before God," whereby indeed the opposites are held together in a double sense: they are held together (*continentur*), not allowed to separate from one another; but by being thus held together the differences display themselves all the more strikingly, as when one speaks of holding colors together, *opposita juxta se posita magis illucescunt*. Sin is the only thing universally predicated of man which cannot in any way, either *via negationis* or *via eminentia*, be affirmed of God. It may be affirmed of God that He is not finite as man is, and so, *via negationis*, that He is infinite; but to affirm of God that He is not a sinner is blasphemy. As a sinner man is separated from God by a yawning qualitative abyss. And obviously God is separated from man by the same yawning qualitative abyss when He forgives sins. In case it were

possible by a converse kind of accommodation to transfer the divine attributes to a human being, in one respect man will never in all eternity come to resemble God, namely, in forgiving sins.

Here then lies the utmost concentration of the offense, which precisely that doctrine has found necessary which teaches the likeness between God and man.

But offense is the most decisive determinant of subjectivity, of the individual man, the most decisive it is possible to think of. Doubtless to think of offense without thinking the offended man is not so impossible as to think of the music of the flute without thinking the flute-player;[51] but after all even thought must admit that offense even more than love is an unreal concept which only becomes real when there is an individual who is offended.

So then offense is related to the individual. And therewith Christianity begins, by making every man an individual, an individual sinner; and now everything that heaven and earth can manage to raise up by way of the possibility of offense (God alone disposing of it) is concentrated in one place—and that is Christianity. Then it says to every individual, "Thou shalt believe," i.e. thou shalt either be offended or thou shalt believe. Not one word more. There is nothing more to add. "Now I have spoken,"

says God, "in eternity we shall speak together again. In the meanwhile thou canst do what thou wilt, but the Judgment is to come."

What, a judgment! Why, we men have learned, indeed experience teaches, that when there is a mutiny aboard ship or in an army, the guilty are so numerous that the punishment cannot be applied; and when it is a question of the public, "the highly respected cultured public," then not only is there no crime, but, according to the newspapers, upon which one can rely as upon the Gospel or divine revelation, this is the will of God. Why is this? The reason for it is that the concept of judgment corresponds to the individual, one does not pronounce a judgment *en masse*; one can put the people to death *en masse*, play the hose on them *en masse*, flatter them *en masse*, in fine can treat the people in many ways like beasts, but to hold judgment over the people as beasts one cannot do, for one cannot hold judgment over beasts; even though ever so many are judged, if there is to be any seriousness and truth in the judgment, it is each individual who is judged.* Now when the guilty are so numerous it is not humanly possible to do this, therefore one must give the whole thing up, one perceives that there can be no question of any judgment, they

* Lo, for this reason God is "the Judge" because before him there is no crowd but only individuals

are too numerous to be judged, one cannot make them or in any way manage to make them individuals, so one must give up holding judgment.

And since now in our enlightened age when people find all anthropomorphic and anthropathic conceptions of God improper, yet do not find it improper to think of God as a judge in likeness of an ordinary civil judge or solicitor general who cannot get at the rights of such a prolix affair—they conclude then that it will be exactly so in eternity. Therefore only let us hold together and secure ourselves by seeing to it that the parson preachifies in this way. And if there should be an individual who ventured to talk differently, an individual who was foolish enough to make his own life anxious and responsible in fear and trembling, and should then want also to worry others—then let us secure ourselves by regarding him as mad, or, if need be, by putting him to death. If only there are many of us engaged in it, it is not wrong, what the many do is the will of God. To this wisdom we know by experience—for we are not inexperienced youths, we do not throw out ill considered words, we talk as men of experience, and we know that hitherto all men have submitted to this wisdom, kings and emperors and their excellencies. By the aid of this wisdom all our cattle have been bred up—

and, by Jove, God shall also have to submit to it. The thing to do is to become many, a whole lot of us, if we do that, then we are secured against the judgment of eternity.

Yes, doubtless they are secured if it was only in eternity they became individuals. But they were and are before God constantly individuals. A man seated in a glass case is not put to such embarrassment as is a man in his transparency before God. This is the factor of conscience. By the aid of conscience things are so arranged that the judicial report follows at once upon every fault, and that the guilty one himself must write it. But it is written with sympathetic ink and only becomes thoroughly clear when in eternity it is held up to the light, while eternity holds audit over the consciences. Substantially everyone arrives in eternity bringing with him and delivering the most accurate account of every least insignificance which he has committed or has left undone. Therefore to hold judgment in eternity is a thing a child could manage; there is really nothing for a third person to do, everything, even to the most insignificant word is counted and in order. The case of the guilty man who journeys through life to eternity is like that of the murderer who with the speed of the railway train fled from the place where he perpetrated his crime. Alas, just under the railway

coach where he sat ran the electric telegraph[52] with its signal and the order for his apprehension at the next station. When he reached the station and alighted from the coach he was arrested. In a way he had himself brought the denunciation with him.

So then despair of the forgiveness of sins is offense. And offense is the potentiation of sin. Generally one hardly thinks of this as sin at all; it is likely that people hardly account offense a sin, and of that therefore they do not talk, but rather of sinners, among whom offense has no place. Still less do they interpret offense as the potentiation of sin. This is due to the fact that they do not Christianly construct the opposition sin /faith, but sin /virtue.

CHAPTER 3

THE SIN OF ABANDONING CHRISTIANITY *Modo Ponendo*,[53] OF DECLARING IT FALSEHOOD

This is sin against the Holy Ghost. The self is here most despairingly potentiated; it not merely casts away from itself the whole of Christianity, but it makes it a lie and a falsehood. What a prodigiously despairing conception of itself the self must have!

The potentiation of sin is clearly shown when it is apprehended as a war between man and God where the tactics are changed; the potentiation ascends from the defensive to the offensive. Sin is despair: here one fights by evading. Then came despair over one's sin: here one still is fighting by evasion or by fortifying oneself in the position to which one has retired, but constantly *pedem referens*. Now the tactic is changed: notwithstanding that sin becomes more and more absorbed in itself, and so withdraws, yet in another sense it comes nearer, becomes more and more decisively itself. Despair of the forgiveness of sins is a definite position directly in the face of the offer of God's compassion; sin is now not entirely in flight, not on the defensive. But the sin of abandoning Christianity as a falsehood and a lie is offensive warfare. All the foregoing forms of despair

conceded that the adversary is the stronger, but now sin is aggressive.

Sin against the Holy Ghost is the positive form of offense.

The doctrine of Christianity is the doctrine of the God-Man, of kinship between God and men, but in such a way, be it noted, that the possibility of offense is, if I may dare to express it thus, the guarantee whereby God assures Himself that man cannot come too near to Him. The possibility of offense is the dialectical factor in everything Christian. Take that away, and then Christianity is not simply paganism but something so fantastic that paganism might well declare it bosh. To be so near to God as Christianity teaches that man can come to Him, and dare come to Him, and shall come to Him in Christ, has never entered into any man's head. If this then is to be understood bluntly, just as a matter of course, without the least reservation, to be taken quite unconcernedly and flippantly—then, if paganism's poetic fiction about the gods might be called human craziness, Christianity might be the invention of a crazy god; such a doctrine could only occur to a god who had lost his wits—so a man must judge who had kept his wits. The incarnate God, if man wanted to be as it were a chum of His, would be an apt counterpart to Prince Henry in Shakespeare.

God and man are two qualities between which there is an infinite qualitative difference. Every doctrine which overlooks this difference is, humanly speaking, crazy; understood in a godly sense, it is blasphemy. In paganism man made God a man (the Man-God); in Christianity God makes Himself man (the God-Man)—but in the infinite love of His compassionate grace He made nevertheless one stipulation, He can do no other. This precisely is the sorrow in Christ: "He can do no other";[54] He can humble Himself, take the form of a servant, suffer and die for man, invite all to come unto Him, sacrifice every day of His life and every hour of the day, and sacrifice His life—but the possibility of the offense He cannot take away. Oh, unique work of love! Oh, unfathomable sorrow of love! that God Himself cannot, as in another sense He does not will, cannot will it, but, even if He would, He could not make it impossible that this work of love might not turn out to be for a person exactly the opposite, to be the extremest misery! For the greatest possible human misery, greater even than sin, is to be offended in Christ and remain offended. And Christ cannot, "Love" cannot render this impossible. Lo, for this reason He says, "Blessed is he who shall not be offended in me." More He cannot do. So then He may (that is possible), He may by His love

have the effect of making a man more miserable than ever in any other way he could become. Oh, unfathomable contradiction in love! But for all that, in love, He cannot find the heart to leave unfinished the work of love. Alas, if then this were to make a man more miserable than ever in any other way he could become!

Let us talk of this quite humanly.[55] Ah, wretched is the man who never has felt the compelling urge of love to sacrifice everything out of love, and who accordingly has not been able to do it! But then when he discovered that precisely this sacrifice of his out of love might possibly occasion the other, the loved one, the greatest unhappiness—what then? Then either love within him lost its resilience, from being a life of power collapsed into the introverted rumination of a sad sentiment, he was a deserter to love, he did not venture to perform this work of love, himself sinking down, not under this work, but under the weight of this possibility. For just as a weight is infinitely heavier when it is attached to the end of a rod and the man who lifts it has to hold the opposite end, so every work becomes infinitely harder when it becomes dialectic, so that what love prompts one to do for the beloved, care for the beloved seems again in another sense to dissuade from doing.—Or else love conquered, and he ventured to do this work out of love. Oh, but in

the joyfulness of love (as love always is joyful, especially when it sacrifices all) there was nevertheless a deep sorrow—for this sad result indeed was possible! Behold, he therefore brought to completion this work of love, he offered the sacrifice (in which for his part he exulted), but not without tears. Over this—what shall I call it?—historical painting of inward life there hovered that dark possibility. And yet, if this had not hovered over it, his work would not have been that of true love—O my friend, what hast thou maybe attempted to do in life? Tax thy brain, tear off every covering and lay bare the *viscera* of feeling in thy breast, surmount every barrier which separates thee from him of whom thou readest, and then read Shakespeare—and thou shalt shrink from the collisions. But Shakespeare himself seems to have shrunk back from the genuinely religious collisions. Perhaps these can only be expressed in the language of the gods. And this language no man can speak; for, as a Greek[56] already has said so beautifully, "From men man learns to speak, from the gods to keep silent."

That there is an infinite difference of quality between God and man is the possibility of offense which cannot be taken away. Out of love God becomes man; He says, "Look what

it is to be a man"; but He adds, "O take heed, for at the same time I am God—blessed is he who shall not be offended in me." As man He assumes the lowly form of a servant. He expresses what it is to be a lowly man, to the intent that no one shall think himself excluded, or think that it is human prestige or prestige among men which brings one nearer to God. No, he is the lowly man. "Look hither," He says, "and learn what it is to be a man; O but take heed, for at the same time I am God—blessed is he who shall not be offended in me." Or conversely, "I and the Father are one, and yet I am this particular lowly man, poor, forsaken, delivered into the hands of men—blessed is he who shall not be offended in me. I, this lowly man, am He who maketh the deaf to hear, the blind to see, the lame to walk, the leper to be cleansed, the dead to rise up—blessed is he who shall not be offended in me."

Under accountability to the highest seat of authority I therefore make bold to say that these words, "blessed is he who shall not be offended in me," belong essentially to the preaching about Christ, if not in the same way as the words of institution at the Holy Communion, yet at least like the words, "let every man examine himself." They are Christ's own words, and they must (especially in Christen-

dom) be again and again enjoined, repeated, addressed to every man severally. Everywhere* where these words do not resound, or at least wherever the statement of Christianity is not at every point permeated by this thought—there Christianity is blasphemy. For without a bodyguard, without servants who might prepare His way and make men attentive to who it was that came, Christ walked here upon earth in the lowly form of a servant. But the possibility of offense (O how great a sorrow this was to Him in His love!) defended Him and defends Him, fixes a yawning abyss between Him and the man who was closest to Him and stood nearest.

For he who is not offended worships in faith. But to worship (which is the expression of faith) is to express the consciousness that the infinite yawning abyss of quality is fixed between them.

* And such is now the case almost everywhere in Christendom, which, as it seems, *either* entirely ignores the fact that Christ Himself it is who so frequently and with such heartfelt emphasis warned against offense, even at the end of His life, and even when He addressed His faithful Apostles who had followed Him from the beginning and for His sake had forsaken all—*or* maybe silently regards this as an extravagant apprehension on the part of Christ, inasmuch as the experience of thousands and thousands proves that one can have faith in Christ without having noticed the least trace of the possibility of offense. But this might be a mistake which surely will be made evident when the possibility of offense shall judge Christendom.

For in faith again the possibility of offense is the dialectical factor.*

But the sort of offense here in question is *modo ponendo*, it affirms of Christianity that it is a falsehood and a lie, and therefore affirms the same of Christ.

To illustrate this sort of offense it is best to pass in review the various forms of offense which are fundamentally related to the paradox (Christ), and then with every definition to come back to the Christian conception, for every such definition is related to Christ, has Christ *in mente*.

The lowest form of offense, that which, humanly speaking, is the least guilty, is to let the whole question about Christ remain undecided and to judge in this fashion: "I do not presume to pass any judgment; I do not believe,

* Here is a little task for acute observers. In case one assumes that all the many parsons here and in foreign lands who deliver and write sermons are believing Christians, how can it be explained that one never hears or reads a prayer which in our time especially is so pertinent: "God in heaven, I thank Thee that Thou hast not required it of man that he should comprehend Christianity; for if that were required, I should be of all men the most miserable. The more I seek to comprehend it, the more incomprehensible it appears to me, and the more I discover merely the possibility of offense. Therefore I thank Thee that Thou dost only require faith, and I pray Thee to increase it more and more." This prayer would from the point of view of orthodoxy be entirely correct, and, assuming that it is true in the man who prays, it at the same time would be correct as irony upon Speculation as a whole But is faith I wonder to be found on earth?

but I pass no judgement." That this is a form of offense escapes the attention of most men. The fact is that people have clean forgotten the Christian "*thou shalt.*" Therefore it is that they do not perceive that this is offense, this thing of treating Christ as a matter of indifference. The fact that Christ is preached to thee signifies that thou shalt have an opinion about Christ. The judgment that He is, or that He exists, or that He has existed, is the decision for the whole of existence. If Christ is preached to thee, it is offense to say, "I will have no opinion about it."

This however must be understood with a certain qualification in these times, inasmuch as Christianity is so poorly preached as it now is. There doubtless are living thousands of men who have heard Christ preached and have never heard a word about this "shall." But he who has heard it and says, "I will have no opinion about it," is offended. For he denies the divinity of Christ when he denies that it has a right to require a man to have an opinion. It is of no avail for such a man to say, "I do not affirm anything about Christ, either yes or no"; for then one has only to ask, "Hast thou then no opinion as to whether thou shalt have an opinion about this or not?", and if he replies, "well, yes," he has trapped himself; and if he replies, "No," then Chrsitianity condemns him

all the same, requiring that he shall have an opinion about Christianity and also about Christ, that no one shall presume to treat Christ as a curiosity. When God lets Himself be born and becomes man, this is not an idle notion of His, something that occurs to Him as a way of undertaking something to put an end after all to the boredom which people have been impudent enough to say must be associated with being God—it is not for the interest of an adventure. No, when God does this it is the seriousness of existence. And the seriousness in this seriousness is that every one *shall* have an opinion about it. When a king visits a provincial town he regards it as an affront if without sufficient excuse an office-bearer in the town fails to do him homage. But what I wonder would he judge if one were to ignore entirely the fact that the King was in town, were to behave as a private person who on such an occasion "doesn't care a fig for His Majesty and the royal law"? And so it is also when it pleases God to become man—that then it pleases a man (and what the office-bearer is to the King, that is every man before God) to say of it, "Well, that's something about which I don't wish to have any opinion." So it is one speaks superciliously of that upon which one essentially looks down—and so one superciliously looks down upon God.

The next form of offense is the negative but passive form. It feels to be sure that it is not able to ignore Christianity, it is not capable of letting all that about Christ remain in doubt, and then being for the rest busy about life. But neither does it believe; it continues to stare at one and the same point, the paradox. To that extent is honors Christianity after all, it gives expression to the conviction that the question, "What think ye of Christ?", is the most decisive question. Such an offended man lives on like a shadow; his life is consumed because in his inmost soul he is constantly preoccupied with this decision. And thus he attests (as the suffering of unhappy love attests the reality of love) —he attests what a reality Christianity possesses.

The last form of offense is that about which we are speaking in this chapter, the positive form. It declares that Christianity is a falsehood and a lie, it denies (denies that He existed or said He was what he said He was) either docetically or rationalistically, so that Christ either becomes a particular man, but only apparently, or He becomes only a particular man, so that He either becomes, docetically, poetry and mythology which make no claim to reality, or rationalistically, a reality which makes no claim to be divine. In this denial of Christ as the paradox there is

naturally implied the denial of everything Christian: sin, the forgiveness of sins, etc.

This form of offense is sin against the Holy Ghost. As the Jews said of Christ that He cast out devils by the help of the devil, so does this form of offense make of Christ an invention of the devil.

This offense is the highest potentiation of sin, which is a fact people generally overlook inasmuch as they do not Christianly construct the opposition sin /faith.

On the other hand, this opposition is affirmed in the whole of this work, which straightway in the first section (I.A) constructed the formula for the situation where no offense at all is to be found: "By relating itself to its own self and by willing to be itself, the self is grounded transparently in the Power which constituted it." And this formula again, as has often been noted, is the definition of faith.

EDITOR'S NOTES

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For many of the notes I am indebted as usual to the Danish Edition of the Complete Works.

17 1 In Danish the verb *ville* always implies volition more clearly than the verb "will" in English, and here the notion of volition is prominent, so that the sense might be rendered by the half colloquial expression, to want to be (or not to want to be) one's own self, or even by a stronger expression of resolute choice. But though this phrase recurs many times throughout the book it may suffice to apprise the reader once for all of the significance of it. In all these definitions the *self* is so emphatic that it might be better to say one's self, but I stick to the common idiom

The abstract definitions of the self contained in this first section (A) are crucial for the understanding of the whole work—and they are indeed a *crux* for the translator When I quoted them in my *Kierkegaard* I translated *forholde sig til* by "relate oneself to" Professor Swenson chided me for that He asserted that the verb was neither reflexive nor active and therefore wrote "is related to." Because a passive sense did not seem to me in place here I used throughout this book the quasi active expression "stands related to" But then there came along a Danish lady, who herself had translated this whole work, and urged on by Professor Reinhold Neibuhr she tried in many letters to convince me of my mistake She asserted that Swenson and I were equally wrong and totally wrong. Finally the question was decided by an umpire whom we both considered competent, Dr. Alfred T. Dorf, Pastor of the Danish Church of Our Saviour in Brooklyn. After consultation with other eminent Danish authorities

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he decided against the objector—but also against Swenson. His translation was, "relate oneself to." Such are the tribulations of a conscientious translator. It is much easier, as Dr Dorf remarked, to do as many German translators do . . . "skip the difficult passages" In this case I do not repine at the criticism which liberated me from the inferiority complex which compelled me to compromise, nor did I grudge the pains I was put to in altering the phrase throughout my manuscript. Dr. Dorf's translation of the "formula" in the last sentence of this section is: "by relating itself to its own self and by maintaining its identity the self has its clarified formulation in the power which established it." This is a paraphrase which may perhaps help the reader to a clearer understanding of this important formula, but in the text I prefer as usual to stick to a more literal rendering.

21 2 Anti-Climacus doubtless refers here to Johannes Climacus the pseudonymous author of the *Fragments*, p. 60.

27 3 *Aut Caesar aut nullus* was the motto of Caesar Borgia.

46 4 The reference is to Fichte's doctrine of the *productive Einbildungskraft* in which he sought the conception of an environing world, the "not-I," and also the necessary forms of thought (the categories) etc. Cf. *Grundriss des Eigenthumlichen der Gewissenschaftslehre*, in the *Werke*, I, 1, pp. 386*ff*

47 5 An orchestra of sixty men, each with a horn which produced only one note.

49 6 The quotation marks here are more significant than might appear at first sight, for the lines put in the mouth of the man in despair are in fact quoted from S.K 's *Journal* where they were registered to characterize his own despair when he had reached the limit of the aesthetic life. The reader may need to be apprised at this point that this treatise, which is so objective in

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form, is an exquisitely personal document, in large part an analysis of the author's own experience In his melancholy more than one form of despair was exhibited (or rather concealed) Hence his competence as a psychologist of despair

58 7 There was at least one moment in his life when S K had a poignant experience of this form of despair. That was when he learned of Regina's engagement to another After the desperate breach of his engagement to her he had in some measure succeeded in "procuring possibility by the inventiveness of human imagination" (to employ a phrase found here in the next paragraph but one). This effort is exhibited in his first three works: *Either/Or*, *Repetition*, and *Fear and Trembling*. But now it was proved to him that "the sum and substance of his sentiment was bosh" (to quote words he registered at that time in his *Journal*); and he describes his situation vividly in the last chapter of *The Concept of Dread*, entitled "Dread as a means of salvation in conjunction with faith," from which I have quoted the most pertinent paragraph on pp. 261*f.* of my *Kierkegaard*. In that passage he dwells not so much upon the terrible experience of despair through loss of possibility, as upon the salvation which may be wrought from and by despair. One can be sure that what he writes here in the following paragraphs (whether it be about the horror of despair, or about salvation by faith that with God all things are possible) reflects his own experience. Precisely with respect to those passages in this book which deal with his own experience the reader will not be inclined to judge that "the form of exposition is too strict to be edifying."

66 8 Truth is the criterion of itself and of falsehood —quoted loosely from Spinosa's *Ethics*, Propositio 11, Scholium 43.

9 Cf. Diogenes Laertius, 2, 5, 31.

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69	10	That is to say, the piece of music by which the enchantment was wrought. Cf. Grimm's *Irische Elfenmarchen*, p. xxxiii. S K. frequently refers to this tale. In the first instance he registered it in his *Journal* at the time of his conversion, applying it to his own sorry plight when he found himself obliged to retrace as it were the path he had trod in his dissolute youth. His aesthetical works were his effort to play the music backwards
72	11	Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 19, 25
	12	This applies to the Stoics, but Plato, like S K , regarded suicide as rebellion against God.
91	13	Goethe's *Faust*, I, 1479.
93	14	Virgil's *Aeneid*, 2, 325.
95	15	S.K. often used the technical terms of Latin grammar which was a favorite study in his youth.
101	16	*Indesluttedhed*. There is no English word which adequately translates this, therefore I have often translated it in other works inadequately as "close reserve," and sometimes diffidently by the modern term introversion. Since others have adopted this latter word, I make bold (though it is an evident anachronism) to employ it here and in the sequel
	17	It may be well to apprise the reader beforehand that this is the way (precisely with such baffling complications of thought) young Kierkegaard talked in the days of his despair, as we hear him for example talking through the mouth of the "young friend" of the Judge in the Second Part of *Either/Or*.
105	18	Shakespeare's *Richard III*, Act iv, Scene 4. He ordered the trumpets to be blown.
107	19	S.K. was such a man: he was unable to get along without a confidant, but was equally unable to confide in anyone Like his melancholy father he felt the need of a "good old father-confessor," but even when his melancholy was relieved he could make confession to no one but God—except as he did it anonymously (and

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copiously) through the mouths of his pseudonyms

109 20 Gen 1 1

112 21 In terms substantially equivalent S.K. describes himself in the character of the "young friend" in the Second Part of *Either/Or*. This in fact was the kind of despair he most obviously exhibited.

113 22 This word is enough to make a reader who knows S K alert to the fact that he is dealing here with his most intimate experience, which he often described mysteriously by this term.

23 Note that this (the offense, or scandal, or stumbling-block of faith) is a concept with which S K. constantly deals. Cf Appendix to the following chapter

118 24 For the application to S.K's case see my *Kierkegaard*, pp. 124*ff*.

123 25 Precisely thus did S K. understand himself, but before this book was written he had resolutely renounced the poetical and had published the *Three Godly Discourses* on the Lilies and the Birds . as poetry to end poetry.

125 26 This was exactly S K's situation in 1848.

126 27 Perhaps I need not remark how intensely personal this whole paragraph is. It is not Anti-Climacus who is speaking here, but S.K out of his own experience—as intimately as he talked with himself in his *Journal*, but with the assurance that no one would guess that he talking here about himself.

128 28 From the days of the Reformers Cf. *Apologia Confessionis Augustanae*, 7*ff*

29 The notion that sin is qualified by being "before God" was implicitly discarded when Kant declined to recognize God's will as determining the moral law, but S.K doubtless is thinking of theologians of his own time who, under the influence of the Kantian philosophy, generally ignored this definition.

129 30 For the distinction which S K made between guilt and sin cf. *Postscript*, pp. 468*ff*.

PAGE	NUMBER	
	31	Ephes. 2·12
130	32	This was precisely S.K.'s own case
133	33	These important concepts first emerged in the *Fragments* and were dealt with more fully in the *Postscript*.
136	34	*Kjøbstat*, a word which S.K. often applied scornfully to the Capital of Denmark, playing upon the name Kjøbenhavn, which means Market-Harbor. He makes the application plain in this case by mentioning the number of inhabitants it could boast of at that time, 500,-000.
139	35	The allusion is to the well known ode of Horace (2, 10, 5) which extolls the golden mean.
147	36	*Adriennen paa* is an expression S K several times quoted from a popular play.
150	37	S.K. frequently recurs to the analogy of knotting the thread before beginning to sew Subsequently he reflected that the only way to make the end thoroughly fast was by the martyrdom of the "witness to the truth"
156	38	This passage is aimed expressly at Martensen, then the Professor of Theology, and later (when S.K attacked him more violently) Bishop Primate of Denmark
157	39	A "position" means something posited affirmatively
162	40	Only a year before this book was published did S.K. apprehend in the deep religious experience of 1848 that his sins were "not only forgiven by God but forgotten." See my *Kierkegaard*, pp. 391*ff*
165	41	In 1854 S.K. wrote in his *Journal*, "Truly it was an injustice to Columbus that America was not named after him, but it is a very much greater injustice to Jesus Christ that Christendom was named after Him."
172	42	In fact Mephistopheles in *Faust* is the absolutely discontinuous, the sudden.
174	43	"Works sprung from sin acquire only through sin their strength and power." S.K. of course

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quoted Shakespeare in German, and I leave the passage as he read it, for this is one of the instances to which a German might appeal in support of the boast that Schlegel and Tieck's translation is an improvement upon the English. For all Macbeth said was: "Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill."

179 44 I, 3116.

183 45 See e.g. Tauler's *Sermons* (ed. of 1842), Vol III, pp. 36*f*.

186 46 Note 1 calls attention to the fact that "willing to be one's own self, or not willing to be oneself" expresses strongly the wilfulness of the attitude. Here the formula is altered (involving in the translation a change from the present participle to the infinitive) because in the context of this chapter the wilfulness is still more evident and should be more strongly expressed. "Not to will to be oneself" is here equivalent to "to will not to be oneself."

187 47 Both are Roman military terms: the first (derived from *con manus*) means hand-to-hand, the second (derived from *e manus*) means at a distance, so that missiles can be used.

48 This passage cannot be translated adequately, for the reason that it plays upon the word *naergaaende* (literally, near-going), which is the picturesque Danish term for forwardness or insolence.

193 49 Perhaps this refers to *Politics*, III cap. 11, where it is said that the argument that the multitude is better than all the clever people does not apply in all cases, for the same argument might be applied to the beasts. It is certain that what follows in this paragraph is aimed at the doctrine of David Strauss, according to which the God-Man is mankind. Cf. his *Leben Jesu*, II § 147, pp. 734*ff* (of the 1st ed. 1836); *Dogmatic*, II. pp. 214*f*.

50 It is to be remembered that this book was written in the year 1848 when in Denmark, as all over Europe, the people demanded and ob-

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		tained from absolute monarchs a constitutional government.
200	51	A reference to an illustration in Plato's *Apology*.
204	52	In those days the telegraph was the newest miracle, and hence S.K. made much of it.
205	53	*Modo ponendo* means positively, in positive form
207	54	S.K frequently uses these words of Luther at the Diet of Worms.
208	55	By this introduction one who is acquainted with S K. will be apprised that he is about to speak out of his own experience In fact it is evident that in this paragraph he has in mind the sacrifice he made for the sake of Regina Olsen. When he wrote this book he was already thinking of the possibility of establishing "a sisterly relationship" with her who was now Madame Schlegel. We can infer this from the fact that just when he was on the point of sending the manuscript to the printer her father, his inveterate enemy, died and made this seem a possibility. Then for fear that so trenchant a book as this might hinder the desired *rapprochement* he was in a torment of indecision whether to publish it or no One of the strangest episodes in his life was the auditory hallucination which finally brought him to a decision. See my *Kierkegaard*, pp. 246*ff*.
209	56	Plutarch, *De garrulitate*, cap. 8.



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